

# SoulSpace

SERIES: AGENDA FOR LENT

Season colour: **PURPLE**

In this series, **Gerard Moloney CSsR** explores the meaning of Lent and how to make the most of this holy season.

**W**e all have moments that stand out as special, and that we never want to end.

I remember being on holiday on Cape Clear Island one summer, sitting with my mother, father and sister on a bench overlooking the harbour. It was a beautiful, sunny day; the sea was calm, and everything was so peaceful, and we felt so at one, that I experienced an incredible sense of joy. The four of us together with, for a little while, no concerns, no worries, no preoccupations. I didn't want it to end. It was a peak moment.

Peter, James and John have a peak moment in today's Gospel. Jesus takes them with him up a mountain to pray.

While there, something extraordinary happens. It's as if the three are caught up in a dream and, suddenly, they see Jesus in all his heavenly glory with Moses and Elijah, radiant, as he really is. It's such a wonderful experience the three disciples want it to last forever. It is a peak moment they will never forget.

## GLIMPSE OF THE DIVINE

**E**very year the story of the transfiguration is read on the Second Sunday of Lent. It reminds us of two things.

First, that we all have, or are offered, peak moments from time to time – special experiences of love and wonder and awe and of closeness to God. Perhaps it is an encounter with nature, or the birth of a child, or a beautiful piece of music, or a moment of special intimacy with a loved one. Every Eucharist is also an

invitation to such a moment, to experience God-with-us in a special way. These peak experiences don't happen very often but that's what makes them special. They give us a glimpse of the divine.

## GOD'S PROMISE

**T**he transfiguration story is also a reminder and a promise offered to the disciples and to all of us. This story takes place immediately after Jesus' prediction of his death, and in the midst of the growing hostility of the authorities towards him. It was a troubling time for the disciples. The experience of the transfiguration is to give them a boost. It is to reassure them of who Jesus really is, and offer them a glimpse of what their destiny will be if they remain faithful to him. Jesus knew there would be difficult days ahead when the disciples' faith would be tested. The memory of the transfiguration would help to sustain them.

That's the promise made to us, too. We will have our peak experiences, but we will also have our trough experiences, our rough times. We can feel lost, alone, useless, hurt. Things can seem to be going against us. Our faith can wobble and our Lenten enthusiasm wane. The transfiguration story is told on this second Sunday of Lent to assure us and give us a lift. Even when we feel the absence of God, we are assured that God is with us, that God doesn't abandon us, and that we can be confident for the future. That mountaintop experience will be our lasting moment, too. ■



## Today's readings

**Genesis 22:1-2.9-13.15-18**

**Romans 8:31-34**

**Mark 9:2-10**

## GOD'S WORD TODAY

Jesus has already told the disciples that anyone who would be his disciple must take up their cross and be prepared to lose their very being, their innermost self. Peter, James and John are given a glimpse of Jesus' divine self, a manifestation of who Jesus really is. That is the true goal of the journey, beyond Calvary. Somehow the cross and resurrection – the event we understand as the Paschal Mystery – are crucial to the coming of God's kingdom in its fullness. The call to

listen to him points to the proper response to Jesus and his place in the paschal mystery.

We are setting out on a similar journey through Lent, and the liturgy provides us with a similar glimpse, much less dramatic, in which it puts before us the message of Jesus' true identity as the Son of God and the central place of the cross, not just in God's plan as it is presented, but in our own lives as well. The purpose of Lent is to bring us closer to God and to Jesus. The instruction, "Listen to him", is addressed to us: we would do well to heed it.

# PEAK EXPERIENCE

**M**emories of special moments help us cope during difficult times. Our Lenten journey, like our Christian journey, can be challenging and even overwhelming, especially in the secular, busy world in which we live today. The story of the transfiguration offers us a timely incentive to keep on going by providing a glimpse of what our destiny will be as faithful followers of Jesus.

