

Msgr. Dennis Sheehan
Homily Given on March 8, 2009
Second Sunday of Lent
Liturgical Year B

When was the last time you looked into a microscope? What to the naked eye was a small glob or a speck of dirt was suddenly full of color, patterns and even movement. Telescopes on the night sky transform the blackness into a world of light, awe and power.

These are, in a way, whole new insights into reality. Something of that shock and surprise confronts Peter, James and John today. The deepest reality of Jesus leaps out of this event and confronts them – and us – face on.

Did it happen? That's a normal American question. I submit it did. The story is told three times in the gospels. Peter refers to it years later in one of his letters. Yes, it did happen.

What did happen? For the chemistry or physics of the event, I'm as much in the dark as you. This is an event speaking to faith. Most of us have never experienced anything like this. But to conclude from that that it didn't happen to Jesus is to narrow reality in our own limited world. Yes, it happened – to Jesus, to Peter, James and John.

Let's look at the event on the mountain from God's point of view. What does it say? Take a step back. Jesus came on the scene proclaiming God's kingdom. God had decided to remake a new created kingdom, and Jesus is the beginning of that. He is the long awaited Messiah! He's not military. He's not royal, he's not leading an army. Still and all, Peter and the disciples have come to accept who Jesus is.

Here today, Jesus literally pulls back the veil. What was hidden, gleams. What was silent, speaks. Here on the mountain, like that first view into a microscope, we see Jesus in a whole new way. We gasp in wonder. We'll never look at him the same way again.

Today's mountain transfiguration is a reassurance. Jesus is a different kind of Messiah. But he's God's Son – have no doubt of that. He's headed for a cross – no question of that either. But if he's God's Son, then listen and follow.

That's the story we have to tell. On the way to the cross, the curtain is pulled back. The vision on the mountain doesn't mean the cross won't happen. But the vision on the mountain changes the way we look at Jesus' cross. We pause on this mountain today. In a scant few weeks' time we will be on Golgotha, Calvary – another mountain. There, too, we'll see who Jesus is. He is the beloved Son. Listen to him.

For the gift of seeing Jesus in a whole new way, let us give thanks to the Lord our God.