

Last Epiphany (A)  
Mt 17.1-9  
February 3, 2008  
Fr. Daniel L. Clarke

*Tell the vision to no man until the son of Man is risen from the dead.*

### **In † Nomine Patris**

I discover, as I get a little older each day, that with somewhat greater frequency I awake just before the alarm rings each morning with two questions popping to mind immediately:

the first is always, "Do I HAVE to get up now?"  
and the second, "Who AM I?" I sometimes forget overnight!

So far I haven't had to check my driver's license in order to answer the second question, but I find the answer easier after caffeine.

Thus the first battle of the day is against the urge not to move from my really comfortable bed.

The second, more of a skirmish, really, is against that really comfortable fog of sleep and mental inactivity: it's a skirmish because I can work on remembering WHO I AM as I wobble off for a warm rejuvenating shower.

And I suspect a few of you are just like me.

But I wonder if we may not have just inadvertently touched on a tremendously important question.

WHO AM I? Do we know who we are, really?  
WHO AM I? is a question we might do well to reflect on for greater lengths than just that morning stagger to find the hot water.

In fact, come to think of it, is it possible that all of human life is really a voyage of discovery toward an ultimate sense of WHO I AM?

And isn't it also just possible that the whole of the Christian Religion is an endeavor to know NOT ONLY WHO I AM but WHO IS THIS JESUS at whom I'm staring?

We always find our best answers in relationships; and the Christian answer to WHO I AM is only found in relationship to Jesus and his Church.

Have you ever noticed that WHO YOU ARE changes according to whom you are talking with, with whom you are working? With whom you are in relationship? You are not the

exact same person to your wife and to your children.

I am a different me to the Highway Patrolman pulling me over on I-95 than I am to my mother writing me a check to pay the ticket.

In some sense, there is NO ANSWER to WHO AM I except as I am in relation to another person.

Walt Whitman was hinting at this theological and sociological truth in his marvelous couplet "The untold want by life and land ne'er granted, Now, Voyager, sail thou forth to seek and find." And Olive Higgins Prouty in her novel *Now, Voyager* tells the story of one who discovers her inner truth and outer beauty through her relationships of love and service, and thus changing everyone!

The quest of this human life, this voyage from cradle to grave, is the discovery of who I am and the gift of the Christian faith is the providing of a relationship with THE ONE who is always the same regardless of it being me, or you, or the Archbishop of Canterbury who speaks to him!

Here he stands today upon Mt. Tabor transfigured before his disciples, his face white as light. The question WHO ARE YOU, LORD? probably ran through the minds of all 3 disciples, especially when they heard "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased: listen to him!"

"WHO IS THIS JESUS?" and WHO AM I? in relation to him?

"He is more than we thought at first," one of them surely thought; (St. John probably, the intellectual) and with this vision of the Transfiguration the voyage of discovery of WHO HE IS went forward not a few furlongs.

But did they guess it totally that day – that they were being given a glimpse of "the glory that shall be theirs above who joy in God with perfect love"?

Did they understand, as St. John would, that here stood before them the One who says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die?"

Today's vision is the advance notice, the sneak preview, of the Truth about Jesus; "I am the Resurrection and the Life;" but none of his disciples would really get it until the Son of Man was crucified and raised from the dead.

WHO HE IS is, in fact, the thing we long for most: LIFE ITSELF in all its fullness; and when we enter into relationship with him we are for the first time and for that time only TRULY ALIVE.

Anything else that this relationship is a kind of snooze in a comfortable bed, a trance in

a stupefying fog, a sleep of forgetfulness, a loss of WHO I AM: comfortable, to be sure, just like every coffin I ever saw: the untold want by life and land ne'er granted. But each of us has been baptized, and as Christians we have entered into a life-long relationship with this Crucified Man who is Resurrection and Life as well. Just as our baby brother Rutledge Hampton Kinloch Hyman shall be, just moments from now.

And our relationship to this Jesus, our relationship to him who is LIFE ITSELF changes who we are! The question WHO AM I? has different answers BEFORE we know Jesus, and AFTER. My relationship to this Beloved Son of God, my life of listening to him CHANGES ME, TRANSFIGURES and RECREATES me. I grow, I flourish, I live in relationship with Jesus. I stagnate, wither, and perish alone apart from him.

My brothers and sisters, the alarm is about to ring: it's set for Wednesday this week. Am I awake yet? Shouldn't I get up now? And just WHO AM I anyway, waking up from this torpor and fog? The Church's voice rings out like the Watchmen on the mountainside at Advent: Awake O sleeper, and rise from death, and Christ will give you LIFE.

WHO AM I?

A free individual, answerable to none, responsible for none, free to serve myself so long as I do no harm?

Or am I brother of all, Father, Mother, and Caretaker of all, servant of all, free to love and to give till Life Itself shall call me home?

WHO AM I?

The autonomous loner, consuming all I can grab? O untold want! Emptiness beyond all other.

Or one who seeks the Vision of Christ, a sustaining relationship with him who is the Resurrection and the Life Itself.

Have I gotten comfortable? Have I grown drowsy? Have I neglected my relationship to Jesus and to others? Have I failed to sing the lovesongs Christ longs to hear? Not feasted with him at the table he spreads? Scorned those needful souls whom Jesus loves most?

Awake, then, and remember who you are: the one he has purchased with his blood, the one to whom he has offered everything. Now, Lenten voyager, sail thou forth to seek and find.