

*2Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. 4And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 5Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" 8Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.*

*9As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.*

Men in Black.

I suspect most of you know that it was not a movie about Catholic priests.

Aliens - everywhere aliens clothed in what looks like human flesh and blood until the flesh is pushed aside to reveal a different reality altogether. Attractive human flesh was masking grotesque alien creatures - creatures bent on taking over the world. But the men in black defeat them, at least until the next sequel comes out.

Now you must be wondering why I would start the sermon today talking about men in black though I am sure some of you have already guessed. For in the opposite way it is the story of Jesus.

He is one from another realm, clothed in human flesh – intent on taking over the whole world. But he is no alien, for this very world came into being through him. Still when I read today's gospel I think of Men in Black for suddenly up on that high mountain apart – separate from the day to day world - Jesus changes – the Greek word is the root word for metamorphosis – Jesus suddenly is transfigured – his appearance changed – his clothing becoming dazzling white – whiter than anyone on earth can make it. It is as if for a moment he takes off the mask and Peter and James and John see him as he really is and he is with Elijah, the miracle working prophet who had lived centuries earlier and who had not died but was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind, and with Moses, the great prophet who led the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt and who on another mountain received the Ten

Commandments from the very hand of God. Suddenly all the veils are pulled back and the disciples see Jesus as he really is and Mark tells us they were terrified.

Terrified.

Then out of a cloud the Almighty spoke, “This is my son, the Beloved, listen to him.” And it was over. Jesus, just the normal human looking Jesus was with them - no cloud, no Elijah, no Moses, no dazzling white - just Jesus.

Do you think the disciples were disappointed to be left just with Jesus, this all too human Jesus who was talking about going to Jerusalem and dying. Were they disappointed in being left with Jesus who had said to them, “Those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake and the sake of the gospel will save it?”

“Listen to him!” the voice had said. It seems that was the point of the whole event – the words “This is my Son, listen to him.”

You know, I think a glowing Jesus would be a lot easier to sell than a crucified Lord - a strong and mighty Jesus – a successful Jesus – a heavenly Jesus.

But we put a cross on the wall. Isn't that strange?

Paul says of the meal we share here that through it “we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again.” And when Jesus was raised from the dead what did he show his followers? The marks in his hands and side – the wounds.

I go back to Men in Black – who is the real Jesus? The one who was seen on that mountain or the one who was seen on the cross? Well, let's talk about mothers for a bit.

It seems to me that Easter is a little like Mother's Day. Mom gets all dressed up and gets a corsage and doesn't have to do any cooking and everyone gives her a nice card and says thanks. So on Easter Jesus gets all dressed up in a glorious body – the body that is glimpsed at the Transfiguration. But what is glorious about

mothers is not Mothers' Day but the way they have given themselves for those they love. I think that Christians have understood that what is glorious about Jesus is his giving himself for us. The glory of God is not a glowing presence and walking through walls and knowing all mysteries but giving his own life for you - loving you - wanting to be with you.

The disciples are given a glimpse of a glowing glory – a reality from another realm – so they might come to understand that Jesus has chosen to take off that glory that he might live the glory of loving you. And Jesus invited Peter and James and John into that same glory.

And you. You save your life in the very moment you lose yourself in the very way Jesus lost himself – in love. Mothers and fathers know that – but Jesus wants you to lose yourself beyond your family. Love for those who can give you nothing in return, that is the great blessing Jesus wants you to know.