Columns
Spirituality



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July 10, 2024

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The sixth day of our lives arrives when we acknowledge that something remains incomplete within us and in our surroundings, in how we live and interact. It's at this point that we are invited to "ascend" the mountain with fellow community members, mirroring Jesus' journey with his disciples as described in Matthew 17:1-9.

We ascend to distance ourselves from the daily hustle and bustle, gaining perspective and embracing the experiences offered to us.

The sixth day precedes the Sabbath in the Jewish calendar. It is the eve of the day when the completion of creation is celebrated, and God rests in celebration of His work. Today, we focus on this sixth day, the day before the Sabbath, when something significant occurs on the mountain.

Six days after Jesus rebuked Peter as an adversary of the kingdom (Matthew 16:23) for not understanding the messianic path Jesus was undertaking, Jesus explains to his followers that bearing the cross involves accepting the consequences of following him, not just enduring whatever comes their way. Then, Jesus leads them to a high and secluded mountain, indicating that the experience will be profoundly significant as a place of encounter with God. This experience is both exclusive in its depth and communal in its sharing.

On the mountain, Jesus reveals to them the reality and quality of a life that transcends death. He does this by providing an experience where a cloud, symbolizing the divine presence, appears, and a voice is heard saying, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5). These words echo the experience of Jesus' baptism. The key difference is that at the baptism, it is Jesus who hears them, while in this scene, they are heard by the disciples, and through them, by all of us.

> The world needs the Gospel, as it is the answer to all social problems that begin and end in the ego.
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When confronted with a significant experience beyond our control, we often react with fear. This fear vanishes when Jesus touches us (Matthew 17:7), just as he touched the sick and the dead, restoring them to health and life. Fear underlies various ailments that Jesus heals along the way: blindness, which severely hinders our ability to discern the path of discipleship; paralysis, which prevents us from moving in his direction; and death, resulting from the lack of true nourishment.

In the text, at the moment when the voice is heard, the vision fades, emphasizing that the narrative is crafted to highlight the voice through which Jesus' identity is revealed: "This is my Son, the Beloved, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

From my personal experience and from observing many people during retreats and spiritual guidance, I can affirm that these words evoke varied and profound reactions.

Most of us respond, "Of course, Jesus is the Son." However, the challenge begins precisely because, in this text, unlike the account of the baptism where Jesus hears these words, it is the believing and faithful community—despite its doubts and mediocrity—that hears them. This community is represented by the three disciples who accompany Jesus on the high mountain.

These words let us know that it is Jesus to whom we must listen, indicating that the Old Testament has been surpassed. Jesus becomes the teacher who communicates a new relationship with God, one that is filial, personal, close and loving.

These words also suggest that any image, experience or communication of a god that does not fit this pattern is not the God of Jesus.

Jesus shares his most intimate experience with them so that by participating in it, they can make it their own. This God is your God. Today, you are the beloved son or daughter to whom we must listen.

The world needs the Gospel, as it is the answer to all social problems that begin and end in the ego. The Christian community lacks "the first proclamation," as a concerned bishop told us, aiming to align his diocese to start anew and renew its roots. We need a personal and communal encounter with the risen Jesus and with the people to whom he sends us.

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The question that arises instinctively is whether we have a role in making that declaration. Most of us would likely answer yes, myself included. However, it's possible that we're unsure how to express it. We may believe that, since it's such a personal and intimate experience, we shouldn't discuss it beyond acknowledging that it gives us life. Moreover, many feel hesitant because they lack formal training in theology or deep biblical studies, thinking they lack the authority to speak on the matter.

As many spiritual teachers emphasize, our inner strength wanes from a lack of solitude, silence and connection with nature.

For those of us in the Northern Hemisphere, these words reach us during the peak of vacation season, presenting a prime opportunity to heed their message. We are encouraged to ascend the lofty mountains or seek out a serene spot in nature, where the silence speaks through the sea, the rustling fields or the whispering forest. In these tranquil settings, we invite the Word to accompany us. Often, we claim not to comprehend it fully, yet today, if we choose, it can profoundly transform our lives. "You are my daughter, my beloved son, Listen to him," Jesus declares about our journey.

You might feel unheard, whether by your children, students or the institutional church. I encourage you to first listen to Him, for then you will have something significant to share. Perhaps you'll simply express how silence revitalizes you, His Word dignifies you, and you feel renewed strength despite grief, illness, loneliness or overwhelming fears.

As we listen to Him, fear gradually dissipates, along with blindness, paralysis, silence and weakness. This marks the beginning of our descent. Yes, because the experience unfolds between ascent and descent. The descent means returning to daily life, now enriched by the profound realization of knowing yourself a beloved daughter.

Perhaps now you do have something to share. We're listening!

And thus begins the seventh day, when everything is fulfilled. You feel complete, and the community rejoices. Your environment transforms, and newfound energy radiates as your time on the mountain with Jesus and the community rejuvenates you and restores color to your cheeks. Now, you feel more empowered to act authentically, free from fear. You're ready to make bold decisions infused with Gospel spirit, to open up more, and to commit yourself without comparing to others ...

There will be a seventh day if we embrace the sixth.

Rest well. May your life be blessed with a joyful seventh day.

[This story was originally published in Spanish on July 5, 2024.]