

Way back in the olden days there were things called pay phones and phone booths - since people didn't have cell phones, one could find one of these and for a small fee, make a phone call when you weren't at home or in the office

Usually phone booths were just phone booths, but they have been imagined to be much more: for Superman, a phone booth was the place he transformed from Clark Kent to Superman; for Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure, a phone booth was a time machine; for Dr. Who, a phone booth is a space that is bigger on the inside than it is on the outside - <wow! that sounded a lot more nerdy out loud than it did when I wrote it down>

In these movies and TV shows, the humble phone booth was more than just a phone booth

Our God too is an expert on making the ordinary extraordinary

In the first reading, God is talking to Abram - the name Abram means "father" - which at this point sounds ridiculous because Abram does not have any children - and both Abram and his wife Sarai are advanced in years

So to the outside world, Abram was just another childless man in the Middle East - Abram may have appeared ordinary, but really he was extraordinary - first God revealed Himself to Abram and Abram believed in Him - now all of the other religions in the world were polytheistic - this means they believed in more than one God - for example, on our own continent, the Native Americans believed in one god for the trees, one of the eagle, and so on - Abram believed God when He said He was one - thus Abram is the father of the three monotheistic religions in the world: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

In the first reading, God takes Abram outside and promises that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars - despite not having any children, Abram put his faith in God

Then God promises Abram land - God affirms His promise by putting Abram in a deep sleep and then coming down upon the animal offerings in the appearance of fire - God promises that Abram's descendants will possess the land from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates

At a surface level, Abram has no reason to trust God - when it comes to appearances (and reality) Abram has no children from which countless descendants can flow from nor does he have an army in which to possess a huge chunk of land - and yet Abram does - he trusts that God will come through on His promises

Now we know that Jesus was both fully God and fully man - however, in appearance Jesus looked just like an other human man living in Israel 2000 years ago

Often it was hard for Jesus' disciples to grasp who He really is

So Jesus took Peter, James, and John up the mountain to pray - as you know, I recently got to go to the Holy Land for a week - unfortunately, we did not get a chance to go to Mount Tabor, where Jesus' Transfiguration took place - however, I did get to go there in 2007 as a seminarian - Mount Tabor is almost 2000 feet high - it is has a pretty steep face - you don't need climbing gear, but you might spend a majority of your time on all fours - once you get to the top, you can see for miles in every direction - Jesus, Peter, James, and John didn't just go up the mountain - this was a major physical task - we cheated - we took a bus up - also the monastery there serves really, really good pasta

Why did they make the effort to climb this really high mountain? - because Jesus wanted to pray

As Jesus prays, His face changes in appearance and His clothes become dazzling white - and Jesus begins to converse with Moses and Elijah - Moses and Elijah represent the law and prophets of the Old Testament

All of salvation history had been leading up to what Jesus was going to accomplish in Jerusalem - how He was going to go through His passion and death

Notice too that Peter, James, and John were asleep, but now that Jesus appears in His glory, in His divinity, they are awakened - they are awakened to see Jesus for who He truly is - yes, Jesus is fully man, which they could tell from his day to day appearance, but now they could see with their own eyes His divinity, His glory

The Transfiguration unmask who Jesus is - their eyes got to see what they were beginning to know and believe in their hearts

After God the Father speaks, "This is my chosen Son; listen to Him," things go back to normal - Moses and Elijah disappear and the glory of Jesus' appearance vanishes

However, Peter, James, and John, have seen the reality of who Jesus is - that He is God, the Second Person of the Trinity - this Transfiguration is going to help them through the tough times to come - when Jesus is tried, convicted, crucified, and buried

In the second reading, in St. Paul's letter to the Philippians, St. Paul chastises Christians who are focused on earthly things He reminds Christians that our citizenship is in heaven

Just as Jesus' body was glorified on Mount Tabor during the Transfiguration and after the Resurrection, so too our bodies will be transformed at the end of time

At the end of time, when Jesus comes back, our bodies will be joined back up with our souls

Our bodies will be the perfect version of itself - we are not angels - we are not pure spirit - nor are we rocks - we are not pure matter - we are this strange combination of spirit and matter - so when we die, our souls will go to heaven, hell, or purgatory - however, at the end of time, our bodies will be rejoined with our souls

This is why St. Paul says that Jesus will change our lowly bodies to conform with Jesus' glorified body

Abram's future was greater than his current appearance - he was to have descendants more numerous than the stars even though he had no children - he was to possess land even though he did not have enough people to occupy the land - despite this, Abram trusted God's promise

Jesus appeared to be a regular person day in a day out - however, on Mount Tabor, Peter, James, and John, got to see with their own bodily eyes, who Jesus really is - they got to witness Jesus in His glory and majesty

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that we too are more than meets the eye - when we occupy our minds with heavenly things - when we realize and live out the fact that our citizenship is in heaven, then we too are more than meets the eye

When we trust God with our whole being, then we become transformed, then our lives become transformed - this Lent, God wants to transform you into a better version of yourself - not because Christianity is a self-help program, but because God loves you - God wants to transform you - are you going to let Him?