

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus, God's Beloved Son, amen.

How many of you are on Facebook or Instagram or some other Social Media platform? Almost everyone. Me too! I love seeing pictures of my grandchildren doing crazy things or even just normal things. Even though they live here locally I don't always get to see them every day and so when I see their pictures on Facebook I get excited and tend to share them on my own Facebook page. Last night I had the incredible experience of meeting Mark Wood, the founder of the Trans Siberian Orchestra. I know I posted way more pictures than anyone except me and my immediate family was interested in... Did you know there's a new word for that? It's actually a combination of two words, sharing and parenting. It's called "*Sharenting*"... Sharenting is where parents share all the extraordinary and the not so extraordinary events of their children's lives over whatever Social Media they happen to be on. I suppose if you're the grandparent, the term would be "Grand-sharenting"... According to Wikipedia, Sharenting is the oversharing of the contents of the lives of our children. Sharing way too many baby pictures or baby eating SpaghettiOs for the first time. I admit I've done it, probably too many times to count. Most of the time when I share the mundane pictures of my children and grandchildren it isn't with sharing their lives with the rest of the world that motivates me. I share those silly pictures on my Facebook page so I can find them

again. So many times, before FaceBook, I took hundreds, maybe thousands of pictures that aren't organized in any way. So, to try to find the pictures of our trip from Arizona to Virginia from 1988, well I might as well forget it. They're lost to obscurity, or at least lost in a box in the closet someplace. Not so with FaceBook! When I post or share pictures, they're always there for me to go back to and remember those frozen moments in time. In fact, FaceBook actually brings them back to my attention on their anniversary so I can relive those special moments...

This Sunday is known around the Church as Transfiguration Sunday. Jesus takes his three closest disciples, Peter, James, and John up on a mountaintop, the place known for close encounters with God. On the mount of Transfiguration Jesus is changed right before their eyes. So, in today's gospel reading, we have a blatant case of God sharenting. It's not enough for Jesus to have his shining moment with Moses and Elijah, but dear old Dad interrupts Jesus and his pals by bragging about his Son. God did the same thing when Jesus was baptized. Now God's at it again: "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" And this event, as with the baptism, gets "reposted" by other gospel writers to make sure we don't miss it!

So, what's going on here? To understand the Transfiguration, it's helpful to look at the context. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem where he knows a horrifying fate awaits him. His mind must have been occupied with thoughts of his coming

suffering and death. Maybe he even wondered if, in fact, the kingdom of God could truly come through an event that would look to all the world like the failure of his life and mission. Amid all that, the Transfiguration happens, and it thus serves as God's signature on the choice and commitment Jesus has made. In that sense, the *primary* audience for the whole event is Jesus himself. The very same voice commissioned him at his baptism and now comes again to assure him and the three disciples with him, the road ahead leading to the cross is the right one. Clearly, God's statement about Jesus is the central focus of this incident, but it is "sharing" in the sense that it's addressed to the three disciples and, by extension, to Bible readers today. "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!", was meant for us just as surely as it was meant for Peter, James, and John.

So okay, it's shared with us. We can't put that camel back in the tent... But how do you and I go about listening to Jesus? God says, "Listen to him!" So, in what form do his words come to us so we can listen and more importantly, obey them as we would words from our own earthly parents? Of course, the New Testament brings some of his words to light, but many don't listen to all of them in a way that they change our behavior. Really, how much of the Sermon on the Mount, for example, informs our daily actions? Even assuming we do strive to let Jesus' words in the New Testament guide us, when some Christians talk about

listening to Jesus, they seem to be referring to fresh divine direction applied to the specifics of their own situation. During the Revive Ohio movement that swept across Darke County a couple of years ago, many of my newfound brothers and sisters from other Christian traditions would talk about getting a Word from God. They meant they heard God speaking directly to them and instructing them in concrete ways on things to do and not to do in their daily lives. These Christians would actually follow those instructions as if they were commanded by the living Lord Jesus standing right next to them. This Word of God would tell them where to go and sometimes even who to speak to when offering a word of prayer. During that time of Revival I was constantly asking the question, "How would I know if it was me or him?"

I'm not talking about distinguishing between hearing from God and hearing from Jesus, or if it could be the Holy Spirit. I'm talking about distinguishing between my own inner voice and the voice of the Trinity within me. How can we tell if it's Jesus speaking versus some idea of my own bouncing around in my head? In any case, our Christian faith has long taught us that in Jesus, God can be seen through the eyes of faith, given to us through the Holy Spirit. As the late Bible scholar William Barclay put it, "When I see Jesus feeding the hungry, comforting the sorrowing, befriending men and women shunned by everyone else, I can say: 'This is God.'" Don't get lost or confused about which person of the

Trinity you're hearing from, if the Trinity means anything, it is, as Frederick Buechner said, "that the mystery beyond us, the mystery among us and the mystery within us are all the same mystery." Once assured of that, the more urgent question for us is: *How do you know if what you're hearing is Jesus or your own inclinations?* Remember, God said at the Transfiguration: "Listen to him!" There are a couple of things Christians down through the centuries have found helpful in distinguishing the voice of God from other voices:

First, *look for fruit of the Spirit as evidence.* Galatians 5:22-23 lists those fruits: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If Jesus is speaking, then I should experience one or more of these things, right? So, this is what I worked out with Jesus early on: I asked him to please make me anxious if I'm not hearing his voice or if someone else told me something that isn't from him. On the flip side, I asked if it is his voice to please give me a feeling of peace that washes over me from head to toe. For the most part, he has faithfully done this for me, and it's made me more confident in telling the difference between his voice and my voice.

Second, *look for confirmation from the church and other Christians* that what you are hearing is God or Christ speaking. Run it by some people who you know who seek God's will regularly. I also ask God to give me a sign of confirmation. If I proceed down the path I believe Jesus is calling me to walk and

doors fly open and it's natural, I tend to figure it's from God. If I have to push to make everything work and doors keep slamming in my face, I try to give up on my idea and go back to listening or prayer once again... Neither of these methods yields proof that Jesus is speaking to us, but they are great starting points. I have one more tip in case neither of these work too well. I read a book a long time ago that said if you want to do God's will, look around for where you see God working and join in.

Fortunately, God did a lot of sharenting, a pattern that included the incarnation, the cross and the empty tomb. In one of these sharenting bursts, God advises us to listen to Jesus. Jesus will later say if we're going to follow him, we will need to deny ourselves and pick up a cross. God's own words of instruction at the Transfiguration tell us to listen to Jesus' words, because his words are the words of life, for he himself is the Incarnate Word made flesh.

That's something worth sharing and reposting. May you learn to listen to the voice of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. May that still small voice lead and guide your everyday actions and may God's voice be clear and unambiguous. May Jesus voice bring you comfort, healing, and passion for His mission. As you listen and obey Jesus, may the fruits of the Spirit abound in your life and bring glory to God, amen.