

**Last Sunday after Epiphany**  
**Setting Up Tents on the Mountaintop**  
**Matthew 17:1–9**  
**By Father Daniel Mafla**

Dear St. Paul's Community,

Receive a warm greeting of peace and well-being. May the Lord bless you abundantly.

In my last sermon, reflecting on Baptism and conversion, we recalled something fundamental:

conversion is a process that takes time. It is not a magical or immediate change, but a journey taken step by step, bringing our lives closer to God. And far from being a burden, it is a path full of meaning and freedom.

To convert is to clear the mind of selfishness, to free the heart from that which robs us of peace, and to let go of what we do not need in order to live fully. But in this process, a subtle temptation arises: seeking a comfortable zone and putting up a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door of our life not only in our home but also in our heart. Do you remember this?

When we prefer not to look, not to listen, and not to get involved so we do not complicate our lives or carry the pain of others, we begin to drift away from God. For God does not reveal Himself in isolation, but in community life. And living in community always has implications: it requires openness, responsibility, and commitment.

Let us consider a simple example. When someone becomes a parent for the first time, their life changes completely. They can no longer live only for themselves. They learn to think about the child, about the family. They learn to be less selfish. This transformative experience is very similar to conversion: learning to live in a new way. In that context, putting up a “Do Not Disturb” sign becomes almost impossible.

Something similar happens to Peter in the Gospel. He, too, is in the process of conversion. When Jesus invites His disciples to go up the mountain, it is not the mountain of temptation where power and glory were offered but the mountain where it is revealed that the true path to glory passes through surrender and culminates in the resurrection.

There Peter has a luminous experience. He sees Jesus transfigured. He feels he is in a sacred, special moment. And then the temptation appears: “Lord, let us make three tents.” That is, let us stay here. Let us settle on the mountaintop. Let us enjoy this moment and avoid descending into reality, into suffering, into the cross.

But conversion is not staying in spiritual comfort. It is not seeking beautiful experiences that make us feel good and then forgetting the world. Conversion is letting ourselves be transformed by God so that we may then descend from the mountain and live in a new way in the midst of community and history.

The Gospel tells us that alongside Jesus appear Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets. Yet they are not the center. The center is Jesus. And when Peter proposes to make the tents, God Himself interrupts: “This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.” Then the disciples are filled with fear.

And here is something very important for us. God also interrupts us. He speaks to us in the midst of our securities, our plans, our comforts. And when we have put up the “Do Not Disturb” sign in our lives, that voice makes us uncomfortable. For listening to Jesus means accepting the truth. And the truth is often frightening.

It is frightening to acknowledge mistakes. It is frightening to change. It is frightening to assume consequences. For Jesus, listening to the Father’s will led Him to the path of the cross. Therefore, it is not surprising that the disciples felt fear.

Today, too, many, faced with fear or difficulty, decide to do without God, to distance themselves from the community of faith, and to face their struggles alone. But it is not easy to live without meaning, without a horizon, without a word that enlightens. Human beings need to stop and reflect on their decisions and on what is truly important.

We live in a world that pushes us toward immediacy, constant noise, and permanent distraction. We are taught to work only to earn money, consume, and enjoy, allowing ourselves to be shaped by media and trends. Little by little, we may forget the great questions of the heart: Why do I live? What is the meaning of my effort? Where is God in my story?

That is why today the Father’s voice resounds once again: “This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.”

Listening to Jesus requires inner silence, prayer, and a willing heart. This listening helps us live in truth and not remain in the superficial or in a comfortable faith that seeks only personal well-being.

Here the temptation of Peter appears again:

“to set up tents on the mountaintop,”

that is, to use religion as a refuge to feel good without assuming the commitment to build a more human and fraternal coexistence. But Jesus’ message is clear: an authentic Christian experience does not isolate us or install us in comfort, but leads us to encounter, service, and concrete love.

Dear community, going up the mountain is necessary; we need prayer and light. But we must also descend: descend to serve, accompany, and love in the everyday.

May the Lord grant us an open heart to listen to His Son and the courage to live His Word through the love that gives itself. Amen.