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**JESUS, TEMPTED BY SATAN, WAS SERVED BY ANGELS – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi OSM**

**Mk 1.12-15**

***At once the Spirit forced Jesus out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.***

***After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"***

The episode of the transfiguration is Jesus' answer to the incomprehension of the disciples for which death is the end of everything.

Let's hear what Mark says. "*After six days..*" It is a precious indication, the seventh day is that which was indicated for the manifestation of the glory of God over Sinai and the day of the creation. So, given this number – the numbers in the Bible have always a figurative value, symbolic – the evangelist wants to show the fact that Jesus is the full realization of God's glory.

And the glory of God, as we will see, shows itself in a live able to overcome death. Therefore "*After six days Jesus took Peter, .....with him...*" The disciple called Simon is present only with his negative nickname, that indicates his stubbornness, always being in opposition.

Earlier Jesus had turned to Peter calling him "Satan", the devil. Therefore "*...took Peter..... with Him..*" and the other two difficult disciples, "*.. James and John...*" who, in this Gospel are nick named "the sons of thunder", for their authoritative and violent characters. "*... and led them up a high mountain,..*" the mountain is the place of the manifestation of the divine condition, "*.. and they were all alone.*" This expression "all alone" is the key to this precious reading. Every time that the evangelist uses this expression it means misunderstanding or even hostility on the part of the disciples.

"*There he was transfigured ..*" literally "he was transformed in front of them", "*His clothes became dazzling white..*" And the evangelist makes a comparison, "*...whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.*" He wants to indicate that this transfiguration of Jesus, this transformation, is not the

result of a human force, but the force of a divine action, in reply to Jesus' commitment in favour of humanity.

The evangelist demonstrates that death does not destroy the person, but strengthens him. Death is not a personal limit, but his maximum growth. *"And there appeared before them.."* to these disciples *"..Elijah and Moses,"* So the important person is Moses because he was placed higher. He is the principal person, author of the laws, and Elijah the prophet is he whom with his zeal, enforced them.

*"...who were talking with Jesus."* Elijah and Moses, who were the law and the prophets, they have nothing more to say to the disciples, they were talking with Jesus. They are the men in the Old Testament that had spoken with God and now they are speaking with Jesus, that is God. *"Peter said to Jesus.."*, *"Peter..."* again with the negative nickname, *"..said to Jesus « Rabbi..."* Only two people call Jesus "Rabbi" which was the title given to the scribes, to those that taught and imposed the observance of the laws, and they are the two traitors, Peter and Judah.

This demonstrates what would be understanding Simon had of Jesus. *"«Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters...»"* What does this mean? There was, during that time, a hope that the Messiah would be revealed during the most important celebration of all. That was the feast of Israel, so important that there was no need for it to be named. It was enough to say "the feast"

The celebration for excellence was the celebration of the tents, which was in remembrance of the liberation from the Egyptian slavery and for a week one lived under a tent. Well, it was believed that the new liberator would arrive during this old remembrance of liberation. Therefore the celebration of the tents was the feast of the liberation. So, Peter wants, Jesus to manifest Himself as the Messiah during this feast, here is the reason for the three tents *"«—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. »"* Of the three personages, the most important is always in the middle. For Peter Jesus is not the most important, but Moses.

Jesus had still not been able to make understood the novelty which He came to bring and the disciples had remained with the old mentality which is centered on the laws with Elijah's violence. Elijah is the prophet that personally slaughtered 450 priests of another divinity. So Peter continues in his satanic action, he is the tempter.

*"He did not know what to say, they were so frightened."*, literally terrified. Why? Peter has already clashed with Jesus, who had called him Satan, and in front of the manifestation of the divinity in Jesus is fearful of his punishment. *"Then a cloud appeared.."*, the cloud is a sign of a divine presence, and in particular as sign of the liberation on the part of God, *"...and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud."* and so it is the voice of God, *"«This is my Son, whom I love»"*, whom I love means the first son, the one that inherits all.

*"«Listen to him! »"* It is an order. They must not listen to Moses nor Elijah. Only Jesus must be listened too. That which Moses had written and that which Elijah had done and written are to be re-interpreted and put into relation with the teaching of Jesus. Jesus must be heard. All that comes before him and

which coincide with Him must be heard, all that which is distant or in contrary will not be the regular conduct for the community of believers.

*“Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.”* They are still searching for Moses and Elijah, searching for the security of the tradition. But if Moses and Elijah had nothing to say to the disciples before, now they disappear completely.

*“As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”* Why? We have seen the condition of mankind that goes through death, therefore it is not a destructive condition, but a divine power, but they do not know yet that this divine condition will pass through a death more infamous, the death on the cross. So they may have false feelings of triumphalism.

*“They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.”* They continue to exclude the death of Jesus, they do not begin to understand how the Messiah can meet His death. According to the tradition the Messiah could not die.