

Thanks be to God, I'm able to go home and see my family a few times a year, and I'll be seeing them in a few weeks, God willing. And it's always a wonderful experience, and there at home I have the time and the energy to read and to cook and to walk and spend time with my family- all things that I love to do and I am just not able to do here.

And it's very good for my mother as well- she says she can't wait for me to come home, and she is thrilled when I'm there. Her life is just as hard whether I'm there or not, and she has a hard life, believe me, but I get the feeling that my presence there is a respite from all the things that she is burdened with, and which can and do bring her down. And she's very conscious of how limited my time there is- when I'm halfway into my time there, she'll wistfully remind me of that, and when the day comes that I will be leaving, she says- in her best melodramatic Sicilian mother way- that it's like death when I leave. And how do you think that makes me feel?

Yes, the time I spend with my mom is a very good thing, but it can't go on forever. I have to go back to my own life and my own responsibilities and my own problems, but it's not like that time with her is for naught. That time together strengthens my love for her and my appreciation of her and how she helped make me the person I am, and even my appreciation of my vocation. And it makes the next time I come home even more joyful and more affirming of my love for her and for my family. It comes to an end, but that's OK.

And the same dynamic applies to the not-so-good things in life we have to endure- the difficult situations we have no choice but to get through; the sadness that overtakes us when we're confronted with a tragedy like a death in the family, or a financial crisis, or a very real disappointment; even the most prosaic things like the meetings we have to sit through and we

wish would end, and the endless wait for something that we are relying upon to happen. These things don't last forever, even though in the moment it sure feels that way.

To quote a wise man, "*All things must pass.*"

Nothing is wasted in God's Providence, which is God's loving plan for the world and for every person. Those good things in life teach us to appreciate what we have and to treasure what we are blessed with, and to realize the incredible fragility and preciousness of life. Those difficult things in life teach us patience and they teach us that what seems like a crushing reality at the moment is very real, but that they will pass. And that there's more to life than whatever it is we are going through at the moment, and that we can and we will get through it- wiser and stronger and even more patient and trusting, believe it or not.

So when Peter says to Jesus during the Transfiguration that he wants to build three tents- one for Him and one for Elijah and one for Moses- I'm sure Jesus said something like "*Hold on, Peter, can't you see I'm being transfigured here?*". But Jesus ignores that statement of Peter, as well-meaning as it is, because Peter wants this incredible moment to last forever, but it can't. The glory of Jesus' person that is being revealed was always there and always will be, but this mountaintop moment- literally- can't last forever because they have work to do.

And indeed, all of the accounts of the Transfiguration have Jesus going down the mountaintop after this event with Peter, James and John and encountering a man who is distraught over the terrible sickness of his son. And strangely enough, Jesus is impatient with the father. He says: "*O faithless and perverse generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring him here to me.*" Since this comes right after the Transfiguration, you'd think that would make him more serene than ever. But perhaps this return to the normal,

everyday world was jarring for Him and He has to remind himself that this difficult encounter with suffering is as much a part of His experience here on earth as is the glory He manifested on the mountain.

But the father does not give up- he begs Jesus to help him to believe- in some of the most shockingly real words in Scripture, he says "*I do believe- help my unbelief!*" It goes without saying that Jesus does heal the boy, but this could not have happened if they stayed on the mountaintop and enjoyed the experience and forgot that the real world was still there and needed Him and Peter and James and John.

And these disciples looked back on this experience of the Transfiguration when they were being traumatized by the Passion of Jesus, and even though it took them a while to be brave enough to go out into the world and proclaim the Good News of what God had done in Jesus, they came to realize that what they experienced on that mountaintop- as fleeting as it was- was for a reason. It was not wasted- it changed Peter, James and John profoundly, and look at what they were able to do.

It took a while of course- what good thing does not take a while- but remember there is no time with God. There is only love and care and grace, and when you have these things, the waiting for them seems to be like the blink of an eye.