

Dear Friends,

Thirty years ago I had the opportunity to journey up Mount Tabor to the site of Jesus' transfiguration. What I found at the top of that mountain is similar to what Peter suggested in today's account of the event in Matthew's Gospel: "*Lord, . . . if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah*" (17:4). It was not three tents I saw, but one beautiful basilica with two side chapels, one for Moses and one for Elijah. The meaning of the Transfiguration is essential to our understanding of Jesus' mission. The event takes place near the end of his public ministry, giving us and three of his closest apostles a glimpse into the near future, Jesus' death and resurrection.

It wasn't just Jesus who was transfigured that day, though. Peter, James and John were transformed with him. Their eyes and ears were opened as they saw the glory of God and heard a voice that said, "*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him*" (v.5b). It was an experience beyond words, so wonderful that they wanted to prolong it by building three tents.

These three friends of Jesus are not the only ones who desire an extended stay with Jesus, so too do today's young people. I recently read the summary of the Archdiocese of Washington's Report for the October 2018 *Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment* called for by Pope Francis. After listening to almost 1500 youth and young adults from parishes and other groups one of the key findings was that young people are seeking meaningful spiritual experiences today. They want to encounter Christ. They want to know Jesus. They want religious experiences that will guide their lives. Having listened to the young people who gathered for our session in March, I heard that and I heard from some that they have those experiences in our youth ministry program, *Upper Room*. Here is a small sampling of what some said:

"Upper Room has helped my spiritual growth in ways that I couldn't foresee. Besides giving me a greater understanding of my faith, Upper Room has helped me incorporate it into my daily life and interactions so that I am better able to bring Jesus to others."

"Being a part of the youth ministry at JDW has touched my life in so many ways. While being able to grow closer in my relationship with my friends . . . I am also able to broaden my faith and become closer to Jesus Christ. . . the retreats, for example, are one of my favorite things about youth ministry. While growing closer to my mentors and friends, we get a weekend to just get away and be able to learn more about our ever-growing love for the Lord."

Upper Room Youth Ministry is growing and responding to the desires of our teens here at JDW and having some great results. Please keep our ministry in your prayers; to our teens I encourage your participation. You'll be pleased at what, who you encounter there.

Peace and blessings,
Fr. John