"Holy Ground In a Place and Time Apart"
Mark 9:2-9
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In Today's Gospel lesson, Jesus and three of his disciples had a mountain top experience! That means that something really, really special and unusual happened that helped them know God!

You see, Jesus took Peter and James and John and climbed up a high mountain, just the four of them. While at the top, Peter and James and John watched as Jesus became TRANSFIGURED. That means that he totally changed in appearance to a dazzling white brightness. And while transfigured, Jesus talked with prophets of old who came down from heaven. The three disciples were pretty much flabbergasted. They figured that is some extraordinary way, God had revealed himself to them. The place where this happened felt like Holy Ground to them, a place and time apart.

Barabas and Sam are pouring over the 2009 church camp brochure. "Look!" said Sam. "Backwards Bizarro Camp! It says *'Backwards Bizarro Camp is back and wackier than ever. Bring your Halloween Costume, your imaginary friend and your rubber chicken 'cause you are going to need them. Serious children and sourpusses need not apply!'* Lets go to that one!" And Barabas nodded "yes" enthusiastically and said "I can't wait until we are old enough to go to Kayak Camp or The Amazing Grace Camp!"

As Barabas looked at the brochure, he remembered the FIRST time that he went to camp. He remembered that he was a little afraid to be away from home. And he was afraid that the other campers might not be friendly to him. AND he remembered what a great week he had!

He loves the counselors, especially Adam and John! He loves the campfires. He loves sleeping in the Treehouse overnight! He loves hiking in the stream and swimming everyday. And every day, they went to worship. Even THAT was fun.

It was at that first week of camp when Barabas had HIS mountain top experience. Except it was not exactly a mountain top, it was a hillside, deep in the woods.

This is what happened: Barabas was sitting in Fischer Chapel, which has a canopy of pine trees with glimpses of the sky for a ceiling and the spaces between the tree trunks for windows into the woods and big rocks built as the altar and cross. Everyone was there for worship. And while he was singing the first song, Barabas realized he should have used the toilet before they left the cabin! Oh no! Now what should he do?

“I’ll just wait until afterwards.” he thought to himself. But soon he REALLY had to go! So finally he whispered to the counselor “I have to go pee.”

So the counselor and Barabas walked all the way back through the woods to the cabin to use the toilet. On the return walk back to Fischer Chapel the woods were just getting a bit darker. And they could hear all the campers singing one of the camp songs, their voices filtering between the pines. And suddenly, there was a magic in the air, not an abracadabra kind of magic, but Barabas felt like he was standing on Holy Ground and knew that something very special and unusual was happening!

The counselor stopped walking and, without a sound, held out his hand for Barabas to stop and pointed into the woods. There, in the shadows, stood a deer. And it was beautiful. The deer and Barabas stared into each other’s eyes for a really long short time. . . And then it bounded away, deeper into the woods.

Barabas gets goose bumps just remembering that trail from Lower Camp to Fischer Chapel, a holy ground in a place and time apart. That is what camp can be!

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