Just a few short weeks ago prior to and during the Super Bowl we were flooded with some amazing commercials like the really cute one with the puppy and Clydesdale horse. How many of you have seen that one? If you haven’t seen it you may want to ask after mass someone with their hand up. We all know that commercials among other things are meant to sell something, provide brand recognition, or serve the public interest.

Today we heard described by the gospel writer Mark his version of an inspired commercial. Let’s try and make a mental image of Mark’s commercial. Try to be present in this scene. The stage is set. Music is playing, whatever music you want in your scene. The main character Jesus leads three of His closest friends up a high mountain. Can you picture them climbing up this rocky mountainside wearing simple robes and sandals? We see them arrive at their destination a little tired and out of breath and suddenly Jesus’ appearance and being are transformed right in front of them and us. His clothes become dazzling white. Brighter that any thing we have seen before! Not only does Jesus’ appearance and being change but suddenly there are two other people that we think we recognize standing there talking with Jesus. Could they be Moses and Elijah? The three disciples are so excited and overwhelmed to be there with this threesome that they don’t know what to say. Once again, suddenly something else appears, a cloud casting a shadow over them and wait for it, a voice proclaims the key message of the commercial, “This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him.” Music fades away and the camera pans to the three disciples whose faces show the wonder and amazement of the moment.

What’s really going on in this commercial? What’s happening behind the scenes? Here’s some background information. In Mark’s gospel, shortly before this trip up the mountain the disciples are told by Jesus that he must suffer, be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed and rise after three days. Remember the disciples, unlike us, don’t know the rest of the story. They must be wondering what this all means. Peter is even scolded by Jesus for thinking like a human being and not like God. The disciples are told if they want to follow Jesus they must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. This is a lot for them to take in, a lot for you and me to take in.
God ever present and always ready to reach out His hand to us and guide us provides to the three disciples and us divine confirmation of Jesus’ sonship with this dramatic revelation of divine glory. Not only is Jesus’ appearance changed but so is His being. He is the risen Christ. There can be no Easter without Good Friday. Peter must have felt some transformation as well because he wants to put up tents and stay there awhile. Wouldn’t we want to stay too? The three disciples have been shown by what authority Jesus is speaking. God then commands the disciples and you and me to listen to Him.

Suddenly Jesus is alone with the three disciples and he tells them, “It’s time to go back down the mountain and return to work but don’t mention this to anyone until I’ve risen from the dead.” The chances of Peter, James and John not talking about this dramatic course of events are pretty good. There were only three of them and God had just commanded them to listen to Jesus.

But what about you and me, what are we to do? Being a part of the mental picture I talked about earlier could give us a sense of God wanting us to do something. The action I feel compelled to take during this second week of Lent is to Listen to Him just as today’s gospel says. Listening requires your presence. Listening is creating the space in which you can hear the voice of Jesus. It’s going from a life of deafness to a listening life. If we are anxious, nervous, tense, and upset we don’t have space to listen. We can’t let the voice of Jesus come in. Creating that space and being at peace are challenges we all face everyday.

How do I do that? I hope by sharing with you a recent experience I had that you might be encouraged to find that space and peace during this coming week. As part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, RCIA, the catechumens and candidates are interviewed by different adult members of our church. The interviewers can be members of the clergy or lay people. Just a few weeks ago I had the most wonderful experience of talking with three people in the process this year. Their insights coming out of their individual journeys into our Tradition were very affirming, encouraging and challenging. I begin our discussions with a moment of silence, followed by prayer, followed by scripture, finally discussion and a closing prayer.
Making that space to listen is really important for me and helps me to listen to what they were saying. I could hear God speaking to me through them. The whole gospel message of Jesus is, “All that I have is yours. All that I say is for you to hear. All that I know is for you to know, all that I do is for you to do.” It was very encouraging to see how their faith is growing and how their relationships with God are changing. The challenging part of our discussions was trying to answer their questions from my limited human knowledge of the divine. Their stories of listening with an open heart to the journeys of the other catechumens and candidates were very affirming to today’s gospel message, “Listen to Him.” In those radiant moments it is as if we can hear God’s love spoken to us.

In a few moments we will celebrate Eucharist together. As we, you and me, prepare for that life giving moment, maybe we can create a space with a humble and contrite heart for listening to Jesus and His message for us today. He might be saying, “Nothing the Father gave me do I hold back from you.”

Create your space for listening this week through prayer, scripture, or just being present to another person and Listen to Him, maybe you will hear God’s love spoken to you in whatever words or ways He wants to speak to you. Listen to Him.