

The Transfiguration of Our Lord (C)

14 February AD 2010

At the Transfiguration Jesus opened the eyes and the hearts of his inner circle. They had followed him as one follows a teacher. From now on they would follow him as the Lord of life, the creator of earth and heaven.

The Pennsylvania Dutch say, “We get old too soon and smart too late.” Often we find ourselves struggling to see something or someone in the dim light that life gives us. Today Jesus takes Peter, James and John up to the top of Mt. Tabor, and there he turns on the light. Actually, he revealed his *shekinah*, he reveals the glory that he has kept hidden from his birth. This is not a reflected light, this is an inner light, this is the glory of God. It is the light Moses saw, the reason Moses had to cover his face when came off the mountain.

When my family got together we heard talk about the “old country” —not that everything was wonderful there, it obviously wasn’t, but my grandparents and my Dad clearly had a different growing up experience than my generation did. A child of the sixties and seventies we knew that our parents were just not with it. It was the generation gap, they didn’t understand what it was like to be a teenager, and later, newly married. Mom and Dad would give advice and we’d say “thanks” and then we did what we wanted.

While it was clear to me that my Dad’s mother, was totally frustrated and sometimes scandalized by the attitudes of her American grandchildren, it was equally as difficult for us to see things from her point of view. It was almost too late; not until a family trip to Germany, did Dad open up about what life was like for him as a kid in a war zone.

This ephipany came rather late for us. Standing in the tower of St. Michael’s in Hamburg, Dad pointed out where his house had been before the night the airplanes came. He pointed out the anti-aircraft gun position. Then he explained how when the city was ablaze, an uncle found them and took them to the river’s edge; he soaked them in the dirty water to keep them from catching fire as they fled through the city’s streets.

It’s not story you can tell everyone. My father rarely spoke of his youth in Nazi Germany. Now we had an idea why. Being there, in that place that made the difference. It was something that we all experienced together *then*. He never spoke of it again, but I saw Dad in a new way. I just wish it had happened sooner.

Jesus forbade the the three from speaking about what they witnessed until after the Pasion (Mark 9:9). It would only cause jealousy. We know and understand that this is not what someone has called “a momentary abberation,” a freak occurance. This was planned: it had to happen. This experience on the top of Tabor revealed to them the truth. Jesus was no longer just their rabbi, a teacher or a prophet. The inner circle will see him in an entirely different way. The record shows they had some difficulty with this truth—reason enough it was not shared with all.

Charles Duvall says that the disciples’ view of God is now and forever altered. No longer do they know God as “the awesome and holy Other.” Now they see that God has become involved in human affairs; he is present for them, involved in their lives. A previous generation had seen this God leading and prodding the nation ever closer to the Promised Land. He made his presence known in a cloud and pillar of fire. The LORD would be present for what *they*, the disciples, will endure in the days and years ahead.

After the Passion it will become clear that as God knows all about us he wants to be known among his people. That’s why he took on flesh in Jesus Christ. He is the Word become flesh that he might be the Lamb of sacrifice, the paschal victim. Jesus takes on flesh for our redemption. He sends the apostles out as witnesses of his redeeming work into all the world. He sends them to proclaim and gather for him a Kingdom.

God became man for this reason too; that we might understand and know the heart and mind of God. He took on our mortality so that we could converse with God in a way that was not formerly possible. Some people speak to God in prayer very personally, informally; as if he were their confidant, as if he were their best friend. You know those who do.

But consider this, if God became man, and if he is still so involved in our human affairs, then we must of great value to him. God cares. He endured the cross for love of us. I’ve pointed this out to you before. In Genesis we see him fashioning Eve and Adam from the dust of the earth, creating them as nothing else. Whenever the Almighty gets involved with his he is prepared to dirty his hands. Bring him your problems, bring him your pain and shame, bring it on. He cares for you.

What Moses experienced gave him the courage and strength to lead Israel in the land of promise, their destiny as God’s people. What Peter, James and John saw fortified them for what was to come, our Lord’s suffering, death and resurrection.

It was a gift, an epiphany which would prepare them for the greater mysteries to come. But for the short term it would cement the relationship. Last Sunday we saw Peter's frustration with Jesus, the carpenter turned rabbi. "*Lord we fished all night and caught nothing.*" (Why are you asking us to go out and fish again, he thought.) You can tell he didn't want to do it.

Now, even if they didn't fully understand all that Jesus said, and did, and asked of them, they wouldn't fight him on it. They had a new respect for Jesus; it would make all the difference.