

February 7, 2016 Last Sunday after Epiphany “Anywhere, Any Time”

Luke 9: 28-36

Last month, out of the blue a parishioner from my former church emailed me. I knew the name but couldn't place the face; after all it had been over 14 years. Apparently, out with friends the discussion turned to the ministers they had known. This person was in the midst of a divorce and after recalling my ministry and hearing that I went through a divorce as well, sought out any insights I could offer. It was a “shot in the dark but hey, nothing ventured, nothing gained”. I was struck by the vulnerability and honesty, so I immediately replied that I would take a few days to ruminate and reply adequately. We corresponded several more times and I was able to help. I guess this person was more than ready for transfiguration for it was reported that the nerves and anxieties completely lifted. There is still a long road ahead but this person is now able to move forward to find new happiness and fulfilment in life.

Remember a time when you had to make an important decision or face challenging changes in your life. It probably was a difficult or dark time, but once the decision was made, once the challenge was engaged, once whatever was blocking you from moving forward was worked through, you and your surroundings began to brighten up. You calmed down and a deep inner luminescence rose up in you. Nothing had changed but everything had changed. Those around you certainly recognized the transfiguration.

Aha! Transfiguration Sunday— mountaintop experiences, the glow of acceptance and the radiance of new life decisions being made; the dazzling light of God's Presence, shining through our struggles.

Over the years, we have shared our moments of radiance with one another. We have shared sacred times, major turning points, clarifications, profound connections, amazing affirmations, moments of forgiveness, acceptance and renewal. These moments invite us to live abundantly. This Sunday reminds us

that moments of transfiguration are not as rare as we might expect. They are always available when we need them, especially when we are more than ready for them.

It all goes back to our Gospel lesson. **Jesus** goes up a mountain with three disciples, Peter, James and John. He has something big to pray about, and while **he** prays, suddenly the dazzling light of **God's** presence shines through and **Jesus** is brilliant with light. He glows in **God's glory** and he needs to.

Moses and Elijah, wonder workers of Israel's past join him and speak about **Jesus'** immanent death in Jerusalem. In this dramatic pause on the mountain the end of the story is given. **Jesus** faces death, if he chooses to travel on to Jerusalem. Through the exchange with Moses and Elijah **Jesus** chooses to travel on to the Holy City. This transfiguration like all transfigurations involves facing the hard facts, or the bad news, receiving and embracing good counsel, and accepting the costs for new life and new beginnings. *There is always a struggle to face, good counsel to embrace, and a commitment to share God's grace.*

As Christians we know this. We know those radiant moments because we know the whole story and yet with **Jesus** we stay the course. We know that crucifixion always comes first. And still our hearts open wide and the light of **God glows** within us, through us. When this happens, for a moment or more, we gain access to a greater reality. The glow of compassion and the radiance of commitment offer us access to a deeper meaning and purpose so that we might move forward in life, even as it leads to Jerusalem and the crosses of earthly existence.

In these moments, we experience a connectedness with **God and Jesus** and all creation.

In a flash we see that life is not all about us.

In an instant we receive the good council that sets us on the path of truth.

We find the courage to go forth to live abundantly and help other live abundantly as well.

Peter on the mountain wants to make a monument to mark the moment.

But then the moment is gone. With Peter, we too have a knee jerk reaction to freeze the moment – to pull out the cell phone and record the image. Truth is we can't stay there. But here is the *good news of the gospel* – **God** is continually present to us wherever we are. Any time, any situation, any encounter can initiate our trek up the mountain to a transfiguration moment. They are not as rare as we might expect. They are always available and retrievable when we need them, especially when we are more than ready for them.

Application for Today:

The transfiguration you need can begin anytime, anywhere, through anyone. Aha! Transfiguration Sunday: receiving the courage, strength, insight and commitment to live into God's New Day.

Hymn #104 We Have Come at Christ's Own Bidding

Luke 9: 37-43

We have all been blocked: Stuck at one time or another over big decisions or challenging life issues or unravelling relationships. We have all been burdened by health or aging issues. We just want things fixed or resolved but we don't know how or we fear the changes involved. So we take a time out, or we go away for some space to work things out, or we take time to seek out trusted friends or colleagues, or professionals in the field. Or we go to church seeking spiritual guidance. Remember the rubber wrist band with the letters WWJD: What Would Jesus Do? Well, we all have needed to figure out at some time or other, *what would a grounded, inspired, grateful, enlightened, wise me do?*

Mountain top experiences are great. Getting away is wonderful. Seeking out wise counsel is right on. Looking for spiritual insight is smart, but as we know coming back into our situation can really suck, coming down onto the plain can be a real pain. **Jesus knows this too.**

Jesus descends to a waiting crowd and a pressing problem. The remaining disciples have been unable to heal a child with an unclean spirit and everyone is

upset. **Jesus**, fresh from his mountain top getaway, fresh from embracing his big decision, Jesus gets frustrated with the whole flat land situation.

“What a generation. No sense of God. No focus to your lives.

How many times do I have to go over these things?

How much longer do I have to put up with this?”

Now friends, we’ve all been there. We all have said or thought, *“How much longer do I have to put up with this?”* So at least we are in good company.

But notice, **Jesus** gets over it very quickly. He lets go of the frustration. The transfiguration he experienced isn’t squandered in a plunge into self-pity or self-righteous indignation. **Jesus** quickly regroupes and puts the pleading father and his ill child at the centre of his concern. Just as with every transfiguring event *there is always a struggle to face, good counsel to embrace, and a commitment to share God’s grace*, so too, after a transfiguring event *there is always a struggle to face, good counsel to continue to embrace, and a commitment to share God’s grace*.

On our good days we know this too. We willingly get back into harness, we pick up the slack. We reengage life wiser, more focused and more aware of God in our lives.

Friends, we need to bring the mountaintop experience and the plains of our lives together. We need to integrate the time away and our time together into a healing whole. Remember **Jesus** lets go of the frustration of the intersecting moment. He *gives his heart* to the pleading father and heals the boy.

We can do this too. In the intersecting moment let go of the frustration, be present and act with the grace we have just experienced.

The Final Application for Epiphany

In any challenging moment let go of the frustration,
be present and act with the grace we have already received.