

Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord, August 6, 2017  
Sermon preached by the Rev. Daniel Vélez Rivera  
Lessons: Exodus 34:29-35, Psalm, 99, 2 Peter 1:13-21, Luke 9:28-36

Four Sundays ago, I began the sermon saying this, “At one point or another in our life journeys, we believe that we have the power to change other people, especially those we love the most. We probably all agree that people can learn better ways to cope with who and how they are, but people don’t fundamentally change others all that much! I’m not saying that transformation can’t occur, but certain changes are hard, maybe even impossible, and wanting others to be more like us, or more like how we want them to be, is a guarantee on future disappointment. So how is this Good News?”

I repurposed this opening paragraph for this Transfiguration Sunday! Today’s lessons address the Good News of Jesus Christ through spiritual transformation, which is unlike the conventional changes that some people attempt to put upon others! Today’s scripture addresses the physical and spiritual transfigurations of several key biblical characters. From the book of Exodus, the description of Moses, whose followers witnessed the dazzling glow of his face after being with God on a mountaintop. The lesson described how his personal transfiguration changed the behavior of the Israelites who were, as we say nowadays, acting out, by refusing to listen to God’s direction. And so, God went radical on them and showed them some good Godly spirit power. Then in the epistle reading from second Peter the author reminds the listeners that despite what the false prophets were saying to dissuade them from following Christ, they should listen to the prophetic messages of the followers who were truly inspired by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Good News of Christ.

The Gospel narrative is the story of Christ’s transfiguration, a moment witnessed by Peter, James, and John soon after the first revelation by Christ that he would be put to death but would come back to them. On this feast of Christ’s transfiguration, I would like you to reflect not on the physical transfiguration of Christ, but on the spiritual transformation of the spectators - the three disciples who joined Jesus on the mountaintop, where Jesus went to talk to God. They witnessed his mystical transformation there and it changed them to the core as well as the rest of humanity ever since then. The disciples witnessed a physical transformation in Jesus which transformed them, whatever happened to Jesus changed not only what they believed but how they believed. And if that wasn’t enough, they all heard the affirmation from God that Jesus was indeed his messenger and son, urging them then to listen. People of faith wrestle with listening, believing, and staying engaged with their faith despite being spiritually hungry for spiritual transformation. How successful faith communities are in addressing that hunger depends on how open and important it is for individuals to be fed. We continue celebrating the Transfiguration of our Lord to be reminded perhaps that through Christ

ordinary people were changed and that Jesus continues to speak through ordinary people like the disciples to continue transforming the beliefs, the spirits, the souls of humanity.

Let's remember that while Peter, James and John were hardworking fishermen, they became promoters of love and service to others, something that our Presiding Bishop refers to as the Jesus Movement. These disciples had the privilege of knowing Jesus first hand, and what do we have? We have the privilege of hearing the stories and witnessing how Christ continues to influence and change people's lives including our own. Entire cultures and civilizations have changed how they think and act because they have listened to the testimonies of those who have been transformed by the witness of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit acting in ordinary people. When God told the disciples to listen, he intended to shake them up and to realize that it was upon them to carry on with the mission and movement of Jesus Christ and to invite others to do the same.

In his second letter, today's epistle, Peter talked about the transformation that he had and that by committing themselves to Christ, they could also have by committing themselves. For Peter, the name Jesus was like a verb, an action word. The spirit of Christ inspires people into action to continue transforming the world in the most holy of ways; through love, kindness, compassion, and mercy. This is the power of God in action.

We are celebrating the Transfiguration of Jesus today but, we should call this Transformation of the World Sunday, in honor of the disciples and of every follower who accepts the invitation to be changed by the Good News of Christ. As I said a month ago and repeated in my opening lines, you and I may have a low probability of being changed by people who want superficial or less important changes in us, but ponder how it is that the Holy Spirit transforms hungry souls. Consider what incident in your life has changed your faith and how your life has changed by witnessing a manifestation of God in your life.

In these weeks of Summer, take some time to do what Jesus did, find a mountaintop, chill out, and talk to God. Go to a park and listen for God's presence around you; go to a beach breath in the life of the ocean, go on a picnic and laugh with friends and family. Others might witness your transfiguration, they might witness the peace and calmness that your face and body emanate. You too can be, as Peter said in his letter, a lamp in a dark place around you! Amen.