



The Last Sunday after the Epiphany (B)
The Sunday of the Transfiguration
February 11, 2018
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

Last Sunday, I became of new member of the organization, BAAM, B-A-A-M, The Besmirched Automobile Association of Michigan. After Church, I had planned to visit our dear parishioner, Barbara Carduff, who was at Blodgett Hospital. I left here around 2:30 with Holy Communion and consecrated oil for Anointing and headed to Blodgett via Lake Drive.

If you remember, it had snowed quite a bit overnight last Saturday night and into Sunday. While on Lake Drive and driving slowly and cautiously, someone pulled out in front of me from a parking lot. The inevitable happened.

I doubt anyone could have avoided that accident, and indeed, the police officer confirmed that as well. It was quite a crash, and my Jetta, turbo charged or not, slammed into the left front end of the much bigger and heavier, Jeep Cherokee.

There are good news pieces to this story: 1) I avoided ploughing directly into the driver's side of the Jeep by swerving to the left; 2) There was no on-coming car in the left lane; 3) No one was physically injured.

You frequently hear me preach about God being in the midst of every situation in our lives, and I do believe that. I must admit, however, that while awaiting the Officer after calling 911, I couldn't for the life of me figure out where God was in the midst of the accident.

The accident seemed totally without merit in any way and without a link to God's presence at that moment in my life. Perhaps, God kept me from being killed. Perhaps, God was trying to alert me to something deeper and more significant beyond the car crash.

Just what was God's plan in the midst of the accident? Ever has similar thoughts about God and God's presence especially in difficult times? Ever wondered where God was in midst of the difficulties of life?

How can we come to know God's plan in our lives? How can we find God's activity in our decision-making and all aspects of life?

Perhaps, Peter, James and John had similar thoughts at that moment when the man Jesus was transfigured before their eyes. Imagine their thoughts at the appearance of Moses and Elijah, two of the greatest prophets in Hebrew Scripture! Imagine how confused the disciples must have been in trying to make sense of the scene. Why they were there in the first place, and what on earth did this event symbolize for them? It clearly wasn't an accident on a hill in Galilee, a place we now call the Mount of Transfiguration to which I have been. It isn't much to look at, and it's more of a significant hill than a mountain.

At our staff meeting this past week, an important question was asked: "How did the disciples recognize that it was Moses and Elijah alongside Jesus?" A very good question.

Before us today is a copy of a famous painting of the Transfiguration by Raphael. Were the symbols of the tablets and a book there at that moment when Jesus' "clothes became dazzlingly white"? The Scripture doesn't say that. It does say that God's voice was heard: "This is my son, the beloved, listen to him".

Just imagine the conversation after this event and Peter's exuberance in suggesting to build dwellings of some kind to honor Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Surely, the event happened to demonstrate to the disciples just who Jesus was: The fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets and God's beloved son. Easy for us in retrospect but what did all this mean for the disciples?

I can only imagine that the transfiguration of Jesus was life-changing for the disciples, one which they would never forget. For most of us, the transfiguration may not be life-changing but perhaps, it could be.

Today, we conclude the liturgical Season of the Epiphany, a marvelous season of light, with this explosion of light we call The Transfiguration. Epiphany takes its cue from the light of Christ in the manger at his birth, the light of the star which enabled the wise men to find Jesus, and the light that is ours as we strive to be faithful to what we believe.

Today, we look back on beautiful and joyful Scripture readings as we stand just days from the Season of Lent. Lent will provide us with a season of introspection and reflection, a season of coming to grips with our humanity and our need for forgiveness and reconciliation. Today, we stand in the midst of the transfiguration of Jesus, the light of God in Jesus, a light which no darkness can overcome.

As lovely and powerful as that message is, there is darkness in life. There is darkness in our world. There is abject poverty which continues to increase at an alarming rate. There is darkness in abuse and violence, and those impacted will never be the same. There is darkness in the bombing that continues to ravage people's lives in Syria. There is darkness when adults and children die at the hands of those who care little for human life.

There is darkness in our lives, and there is a tremendous need for light for us and for millions of people throughout the world. Do we not long for the light of Christ to be with us, to accompany us, to bathe us in love and give us the assurance that we are not alone?

On that mountain or hill top, Peter, James and John surely knew that they were not alone. In that moment in their lives, a moment of great awakening, they knew their lives had changed. Their lives were enriched by what they saw, what they heard and what they were called to do.

Today, we are enriched. We see God in one another. We hear God's voice in Scripture. We taste the goodness of God in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and we are called to respond. We have the assurance that God is with us and that it is "good to be here". You see, we have been claimed as Christ's today and for the future.

One theologian asks, "Are we ready to embrace a new future? Are we ready to have our future claimed by God? Can we admit that a transfigured God demands a transfigured believer...?" (See: Karoline Lewis: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=4823>) We can claim our place with the disciples in the transfiguration of Jesus, and like them, embrace a change of mind and heart. With confidence, we can journey with Jesus from his transfiguration to his cross and on to resurrection.

My friends, it is "good for us to be here". God is with us. God is in our midst no matter what happens to us in life. That's the blessed assurance I need, and I pray it is the assurance you need as well. Amen.