

From the Deacon's Desk

Scripture Today:

The transfiguration of Jesus can be looked at on multiple levels, and since Matthew's Gospel is written for a primarily Jewish-Christian community, it's meant to conjure up ideas about Moses descending from Mount Sinai with his face "shinning like the sun" from just having encountered God. So in this Gospel we can surmise that Jesus is filled with the radiance of God within him. On another level, is Jesus coming to sense a newer awareness of God within him, or perhaps the disciples are being transformed also in their awareness of who Jesus is, and what is being asked of them also?

The first response of the disciples is fear, because the transcendence of God always creates fear in us creatures. One of the most constant phrases in the whole Bible is the words: "Do not be afraid." We all have had those mountain top experiences in which we are on the top of the world with insight, emotion, and joy, but like Jesus and the disciples, we can't stay in that experience forever as Peter seems to want to do, but must journey onward to the events that await us and them in Jerusalem.

Going to the mountain in communication with God is always followed by sharing that experience on the earth. In fact, the real meaning of that experience is not the transfiguration itself, but in the upcoming events of the death and resurrection in Jerusalem. It is through these events that the full revelation of God and the truth of Jesus will be most clearly seen. Not in the joy of the transfiguration, but in the struggle and suffering of life as it awaits them.

One of the most popular books in our recent culture is Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled*, and the opening three words say it best: "Life is Difficult." This is how life often hits us. It does not mean we do not laugh or celebrate or rest or play. Life is not impossible or joyless or meaningless. But it is one thing after another, each one demanding that we get off the couch or favorite chair and do something in the nitty-gritty of life.

We all know the joy of being on the mountain, and the pain and struggle of coming down from it. Back in 1983 I studied in Israel for a semester, and one day we took a trip to the top of Mt. Sinai. It was difficult getting up there, but it was more difficult getting down. On the way down we took the back side of the mountain which has a series of 5000 plus stairs. This will be a lot easier, I thought, and I couldn't have been more wrong! About halfway down I could feel my knees giving out, and by the time I reached the bottom, my legs were like rubber. Isn't life like that for us? What is awaiting us at the bottom of the mountain? Whatever it may be, we can be assured that God in Jesus has gone there before us, and is ready to help us along the way.

Today's reading invites us to see our worlds as "thin places," transparent with the divine. Divine light shines through Jesus, and while we seldom see the inner light of our companions, the story of Jesus' transfiguration invites us to look for "more" in ourselves and others.

Hey Padre Story:

In the early years of my priesthood I often wondered why Catholics left the Church. Was there something wrong with the Church? Something wrong with them? What were the real reasons?

Those questions bothered me. Then one night I was at a social function in Missouri. A man came up to me with a drink in his hand and said quite loudly: "Hey Padre, I used to be Catholic." I said: "How long has it been?" He said: "Twenty years." I said: "Have you ever thought about coming back?" He said: "Many times." I said: "Why didn't you come back?" He said: "because no one ever asked me." I asked him. He set his drink down and we talked. He and his family came back.

Sometimes all it takes is an invitation. If you know someone who might be interested in becoming Catholic, or returning to the practice of the faith, if they've been away for a while, please ask them to consider Catholicism, or talk to Deacon Jerry.

Whole Community Catechesis:

We will be mailing home the tri-fold brochures on Whole Community Catechesis to everyone listed in our parish records, so if you see someone who used to be active here but has not been active in some time, you might want to ask them to join you for Whole Community Catechesis. People might feel more at ease if accompanied by a friendly face.

Whole Community Catechesis is for everyone in the parish including those with children and those without, and for people of all ages. Once a month on the first Sunday of each month, everyone is invited to the hall for a sit down breakfast together followed by an hour of age-appropriate learning and catechesis. After breakfast, kids will go off with their catechists and adults will stay with Jerry or another adult facilitator in the hall. We will all be discussing the same topic of faith, but at our age appropriate levels. What I would say to a child about death and resurrection is different than what I'd say to a 50 year old about it. So we will all be talking about the same faith topic, but at our own maturity level.

Hopefully these "church/faith discussions" will carry over into the homes for those who have children, but even if you're single or have no children at home, you can still participate in the adult discussion at Whole Community Catechesis.

- Whole Community Catechesis **will not** replace our regular faith formation program the rest of the month, only on the first Sunday of the month.
- Whole Community Catechesis **will not** replace our other programs of faith formation like Alpha, or the newer programs which will be discussed in the fall.
- There is **no cost** for Whole community Catechesis, and you **will not** need to register, and attendance **will not** be taken.

If you happen to be one of the parishioners who like to attend Mass on Saturday evening, you are still invited to join us on Sunday morning for breakfast and catechesis. Whole Community Catechesis flows from the Eucharistic Table to the family table, so we need for participants to attend Mass somewhere, even if it's not at St. Vincent's on Sunday morning.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary will be celebrated on Tuesday August 15 and it is a Holy Day of Obligation. We will have Mass at St. Vincent de Paul Church at 9:30 am. The Diocese of Saginaw is dedicated to the Patroness of Our Lady of the Assumption, so let us all come together to ask the Blessed Mother to watch over each of us and the Diocese of Saginaw.

O God, who looked on the lowliness of the Blessed Virgin Mary, raised her to this grace, that your Only Begotten Son was born of her according to the flesh and that she was crowned with surpassing glory, grant through her prayers, that saved by the mystery of your redemption, we may merit to be exalted by you on high.