

Lets start today with a quiz! And if you know the answer unmute yourself and tell us!

Who was Frances Gum - Judy Garland. Archibald Leach - Cary Grant. Marion Morrison - John Wayne.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday - I prefer celebrating the transfiguration on the Last Sunday of Epiphany and the Sunday before Lent. It seems like the perfect time to celebrate the full humanity and Divinity of God. As opposed to a random Sunday in August!

People have been transfiguring themselves throughout time: Remember that in Holy Scriptures many people got new names to go with a new life and a new image. Abram became Abraham. Sarai became Sarah. Jacob became Israel. Saul became Paul. Simon became Peter, "The Rock." Transfigurations are not the exception. They are the rule.

So, what happens at The transfiguration – as recorded in the Gospels? There are the words as written: Jesus with his inner sanctum goes to the top of a mountain (Mt. Tabor) and there before their eyes is transformed – with clothes that appear bright, dazzling white. He stands with two people who fulfil the whole faith tradition of the Jewish people: the prophet Elijah (to represent Jewish prophets) and Moses (who represents Jewish law) and then, we are told, the disciples were speechless. They were in complete awe. It was such an awesome experience that the disciples (Peter) wants to stay and build tents to keep the three greats with them. God speaks almost the same words as at Jesus' baptism (which we heard at the beginning of this season of Epiphany) and in a blink of an eye everything changes and they head back down the mountain with the warning to not speak of the event until after Jesus' death.

This is what is recorded in Marks Gospel. But, what happens at the Transfiguration? Who or what is transfigured?

Well, the obvious change (metamorphosis) is in Jesus. At the moment of the Transfiguration Jesus goes from being human and God to God and human. He becomes one of the great ones - he joins the ranks. He is transfigured from the one who healed, expelled, taught and blessed to the one who walks to the cross. At no point is the magnificence of Christ more brilliant.

There is also a change in the disciples. They witness the complete glory of Christ - and are left speechless (no easy feat!) Being this close to God, witnessing this light had to leave them changed. Any close encounter would change us. Being that close to the awesomeness would cause them (and us) to be transfigured.

Have you ever experienced something so great that it just stayed with you? You carried it internally for a very long while? For me, it is often music concerts. I remember seeing Neil Young in Concert. Now, I have loved and listened to Neil Young since I was a small child. That night, Good Friday 2008, when Neil Young walked out on Stage I cried. And I lifted my arms in adoration. I felt content and at peace and in love. It was a mountain top experience. I would hope, at some point in our lives we have all had that 'mountaintop' experience.

What do you do with a moment like this? In the pericope of the Transfiguration, Peter doesn't know. But his offer to build booths isn't quite as odd or misplaced as it may initially seem. Peter, taking the appearance of Moses and Elijah as the cue for this event, offers to build them booths. Peter, you see, has taken this momentous encounter with God's prophets and fitted it into a pre-existing narrative and religious framework that helps him make sense of this otherwise inexplicable and somewhat terrifying event.

Yet by doing so he comes perilously close to missing an encounter with God. For just after he stops speaking, almost interrupting him, in fact, a voice from heaven both announces and commands, "This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!" Peter wants to fit what is happening into a plan. God invites him instead to experience the wonder and mystery of Jesus.

I wonder how often we do the same. We desperately want an encounter with God – some sense that we are not alone, that there is something *More* than what we can see and touch – and yet in those very moments that God draws near we find ourselves afraid, unsure, and feeling suddenly very out of control and so we try to domesticate our experience of the Holy by fitting it into a plan.

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Why? I suspect that as much as we want an encounter with God, we simultaneously fear the presence of God because we fear being changed, being transformed. What we have, who we are, may not be everything we want, but at least we know it, are used to it, have built a relatively orderly life around it. And so when God comes – perhaps not in a transfiguration as

dramatic as Mark describes but in the ordinary hopes, encounters, and tragedies of our everyday life – when God comes and unsettles the orderly lives we’ve constructed we try to put those disruptive experiences back into line by cramming them into a plan.

But maybe, just maybe, there is no plan. Maybe there’s only love. And perhaps our job isn’t to fit our experience – let alone everyone else’s – into some kind of “divine plan,” but rather to create space for people to experience the wonder and mystery of God.

I would suggest that transfiguration doesn’t mean glowing in the dark, but seeing others (and ourselves) in a new way. The three disciples were changed by seeing Jesus in a new way.

We are changed when we see another we’ve taken for granted, with the eyes of love.

The world is changed when we begin to view other religions, other races, other genders, with caring and compassion.

It’s pointless to ask how Jesus’ transfiguration took place – we’ll never know. But we can ask how our own transfiguration will take place – and that transfiguration we can monitor, day by day.

My friends, we are all called to reflect God’s light and brilliance and magnificence here on earth. There is a traditional Irish Celtic Prayer that reads:

May the Christ who walks on wounded feet - walk with you on the road.

May the Christ who serves with wounded hands - stretch out your hands to serve.

May the Christ who loves with a wounded heart - open your hearts to love.

May you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet,

and may everyone you meet see the face of Christ in you.

Are we reflections of God’s light and love or are we opaque, dull, tarnished even.

We are called to join Christ in his transfiguration, and as we make our own journey through Lent to Good Friday let us prepare to be the brilliant lights of Easter. Amen.