

## Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Aug 6th 2018

### Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord

We interrupt Ordinary Time with a most extraordinary celebration. Liturgically we skip the 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time to celebrate the Eucharist which itself is the blessing of the ordinary in an extraordinary embrace. We move towards this feast aware that the One God of all is the God of our all, our oneness.

We pray as well with the experiences of God's being close to us at times and with those times of ordinary on-the-level walking around. The Eucharist itself can become "usual" and as spiritually tasteless as the species of bread itself. We pray with the faithful sense, that God is more intimate to us than we are to ourselves. There is no distance of space or relationship between God and us. We pray to sense more often the experiences of Transfiguration in our lives.

Our First Reading is a continuation of the prophet Daniel's night dreams and vision. Earlier in the chapter from which our verses are taken, the prophet has four visions of an eagle, and three wild animals who are all vicious and represent historical kings of Israel's history.

We hear a vision about the Ancient One in a royal setting. A second, Son of Man, is coronated, installed, or commissioned to receive dominion, power and an ever-lasting kingship.

This vision is to encourage the people of Israel that there is coming a time when Israel will again be the People of God and this people will be a kingdom dedicated to the service of the Holy and Ancient One's servant. Prophetic fires, clouds and numerous servants of the Ancient One set the stage for quite a royal display. Daniel knew the history of Israel and how foreign kings had dominated their lands and customs. Something extraordinary was going to be revealed if they only kept faith. This faith would include both relying on their past as guided by God and their future as a continuation of God's faithfulness.

Earlier in Mark's Gospel, from which we also hear today, Jesus went with His disciples to a lonely place where they could be alone. Two weeks ago we heard how their retreat was interrupted by a large crowd upon whom Jesus had compassion and eventually fed them. Today's Gospel is a picture of Jesus and three disciples going up to an other lonely place.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is a "more-than-meets-the-eye" experience. There is more to the human person of Jesus; there is divinity. The miracles of feeding and curing are in themselves forms of this same transfiguring. These gestures are signs, but rather physical and though miraculous they attract people's attention to Jesus as a human prophet. This Transfiguration in the presence of His disciples announces less of the physical Jesus and more of the transphysical or divine. "Now you don't see Him and now you do." The cloud has been a biblical symbol of the presence of the divine and Mark uses this to announce the presence of the eternal God surrounding the earthly presence of Jesus. The three apostles were being invited to go beyond what they thought they knew to this new way of knowing. They knew what they had experienced, but they did not know what they were being called to believe.

Peter wishes to encapsulate the experience by building three booths, putting on locks, throwing away

the keys and living out the personal experience of what had happened. There was something new being offered and retrenching, seeking the security of privacy, and having more of these delightful, exciting, and ratifying experiences, all would be natural and safe. Instead, Jesus, because He did not come to be alone, did not come to be safe, and did not come to be “figured out” urged them back down to live on the level.

Jesus is moving steadily toward His being figured on the cross and this “figuring out” is His destiny and dignity. He invites the Apostles to keep to themselves all they had seen and heard until the “glorification”. They kept His word, but they formed a support-group to discuss what all this was going to mean.

Good things do happen in solitude. Jesus often met persons in their individuality. The apostles were frightened at the intensity of this intimacy Jesus was offering them. They were fearful of the unknown and what else was going to be asked of them. I intend to be very careful with what I write next.

The human and divine natures of Jesus in the One Person is a tremendous mystery. Through His human instrumentality He did His wonderful deeds among humans. His divinity was present constantly and accompanied all His gestures. In the Transfiguration, His divinity met the humanity of the apostles more clearly and closely. Here’s the careful part. In our cultic prayer, our liturgies, Jesus in His One Person with two Natures, meets us as well. There is a part of us that participates in God’s nature! Yup! Both our humanity and that sharing in His divinity, are met and embrace. Our tendencies are to gravitate toward our humanity’s being met and comforted, but we retrench from our divinity’s being met. We cannot understand that participation, that kind of life within us and so we let it go. We love what we can understand and deny, or neglect the mystical or frighteningly beyond our limited minds.

We, like the apostles, want to form small groups to discuss so we can understand. This is obviously very good. However, we are urged to go into ourselves as well, into our own booth, our blessed solitude, to allow there to be some “transing”, some encountering between the real and total Jesus and the real and total us. It is real, even when we cannot figure it all out. We, like the apostles, will wonder if personal prayer, intimate moments between the mysterious God and the mysterious me, is true or just fantasy. The Apostles relaxed their human demanding, and Jesus walked the closer with them back to the other forms of the real.

“When Christ is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” 1 John 3,2

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