



March 5, 2023
Second Sunday of Lent
He was transfigured before their eyes.
Matthew 17:2



Dear Friends,

Many of us in Western Christianity (Roman Catholic and Protestant) tend to think of Jesus as God's "Plan B." We were made in the image and likeness of God, but humans sinned, so God had to send Jesus as one of us. He came to straighten us out.

But in Franciscan theology and the theology of Eastern Christianity (Eastern Rite Catholics and Orthodox) Jesus was not "Plan B." They believe that God had always intended to send Jesus as the completion of creation. They would say Jesus was the pattern that God used to create humankind. So, the humanity of Jesus was the image that God had in mind when God created us.

Even if humans had never sinned the Incarnation (the coming in human flesh) of Jesus Christ would happen so that God might complete his creation. What will complete God's creation of humans will be to infuse humanity with the divine. The Transfiguration of Jesus reveals what humanity looks like with the divine shining through. We will not be complete until we are transformed and divinized by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus came so that we can be transformed. In our gospel passage today, Matthew presents Jesus as the new Moses who will lead us to that promised land—a new humanity and a new creation filled with God. Jesus instructs on the path that leads us to this transformed reality. It is a journey that calls us to change.

Jesus began his mission in Galilee by calling people to 'repent.' Because of bad preaching, we have turned that word into a negative. But the original Greek word, we translate as 'repent,' means 'to turn direction,' or 'to change.' The first thing that Jesus asks of us is to be willing to change.

People who are not willing to change are not willing to turn away from themselves. Often what we think of as God is not God. It is an attachment to our personal way of thinking, explaining, or doing things. Holding on to the conventional and calling it tradition is a way that we protect ourselves from God, truth, and grace.

Today, Jesus tells us that the only way to let God shine through our humanity is through self-emptying. This is the pattern in which we will be re-shaped. It is the way of sacrificial love. This is the counter-intuitive message of the cross. Christ is the transformed, glorified and resurrected state. But the Jesus in his humanity represents the path for us to get there—the way of the cross.

Christians chose the cross as its central symbol. We recognize that Jesus often spoke of 'losing your life' or 'giving your life away.' This is the path that he himself walked to the very end. In his passion and suffering he struggled and anguished but he remained true to his course. He came and went giving himself fully into life and death. He did not hoard love but poured it out totally. Following his path, we hope to be completely transformed by his love into the very reflection of God.

Peace,

Fr Ron

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