

2nd Sunday of Lent B (Feb. 25, 2024 Mother Teresa Parish)

Robert Johnson writes this:

Transfigurations are big business today. I don't know anybody who doesn't want one, including me. And many of us work hard and spend a lot of money to get one -- a new face, a new look, a changed appearance.

Transfigurations are big business because we are very aware of the face we present to the world. And we will alter our face to our advantage if we can. Sometimes the change is not just in looks but in our whole image -- including our name.

Issur Danielovitch Demsky did the same thing and became Kirk Douglas. In the same way, Frances Gumm transfigured herself and her image into Judy Garland. Archibald Leach became Cary Grant. And would you have paid money to see Marion Morrison in the movies? Maybe, but Marion didn't take that chance, he became John Wayne.

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. We are all being altered in the appearance of our face, our countenance. We are all changing. To live is to be continually transfigured.--Robert Johnson, "Transfiguration," The Protestant Hour (now Day1), February 14, 1999. <http://day1.org/747-transfiguration/comments>. Retrieved August 20, 2014.

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, on this Second Sunday of Lent, the Church puts before us, as She always does, the account of the Transfiguration of the Lord. To many of us, this is a familiar story. Jesus takes Peter, James and John up the mountain. Once there he is changed-transfigured-before their eyes. Moses and Elijah appear-representing the law and the prophets. The disciples are afraid of what is happening and then it is over. Many Christian people know the details of the story but not so much the meaning of the story. Yet the event of the Transfiguration is an important one. I would like to take some time today to look at what the Transfiguration really means for us.

Two key things, I think, are found in this story. FEAR and CHANGE. We are told that the disciples were afraid-terrified-is the word in Mark's gospel. The disciples did not know what to make of this. Jesus, the one who they had followed, learned from and loved, had suddenly changed. His clothes became a dazzling white. The figures of Moses and Elijah were there. Fear gripped them. Jesus was different. None of us like when people that we know suddenly become different. It happens a lot. We are going along with our lives, in our routine and something happens. Someone around us changes. Maybe it is your sweet little son. All of a sudden-out of nowhere. He is a man. He is shaving, driving, his voice is deeper and then he is in college. Or maybe we are going along, in our routine and then a family member gets a bad diagnosis that will require our time and attention and help in caring for that person. Perhaps you find out about a sudden job change and your life gets uprooted and you have to move to another town or state. We have to stop and think and we fear that our life is changing.

There is the story I came across of a woman whose husband developed an aneurism and needed emergency brain surgery. Boom, just like that. Out of the blue. And that wasn't the end of it. There were emergencies and surgeries for months, and then a long and uncertain recovery,

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and what it felt like, this woman said, was transfiguration. Her husband had been transfigured, by his illness, and she had been transfigured, too, as she struggled to cope with it. Change brings fear. No wonder the disciples were afraid that night. They did not know what to make of all of this. No wonder why we fear when major change comes our way.

FEAR AND CHANGE. Two strong words. Faith is full of fear and change. Here we are in Lent—a time when we are asked to look at change in our life. We are asked to change behaviors, attitudes, practices. We are asked to return to the Lord. Maybe we are afraid of that—afraid that we will lose the pleasure we get from some things. Maybe we will be afraid of being an outcast because we choose to live our life a certain way and to not associate with people who bring us down and get us into trouble.

Lent in many ways is about being transfigured—changed—looking different. When these 40 plus days are over, we should look different. We should have changed in some way.

And so, what does the Transfiguration really mean? I think it means substantive change. Life itself is transfiguring. Life changes us. Sometimes it is our life...and sometimes it is the life of someone else that changes us. The Christian way of life should change us. All of this---what we do here---our worship---our actions---should change us and in turn should change people around us. Life presents changes all of the time. Our faith should change us. The spiritual life should be a process of conversion, of transfiguration. This Lent it would do us well to look at substantive change in our life. What do you need to do this Lent to bring about true and lasting change? What has to be rooted out of your life? What has to be sacrificed in order for new life, rebirth to happen in you this Easter? We must seek transfiguration this Lent. We must seek to be changed. We must seek to have a clean heart this Lent.

FEAR and CHANGE. Change happens. We may fear it but we have the grace of God to strengthen us during times of change in our lives. Paul today reminds us that “if Christ is for us, who can be against us?” Christ went to the cross for us. Christ suffered for us and thus suffers with us during the changing times and seasons of our lives. And so we do not fear. We go forward in faith. We go forward with the faith of Abraham who trusted God so much as we heard in the first reading today. We go forward with the faith of Peter, James and John as they witnessed the Lord changed before them. We go forward knowing that grace guides, leads and sustains us.

Change is never an easy thing for most people. It involves a lot of adjusting, learning new things, places and people. Change involves mourning what may have been lost. Radical change—like a change of heart or taking on a new way of life—can be a scary thought. Yet, the Jesus of the Transfiguration meets us in our fear. Today we can probably think of things in our life where change—whether it be minor or major—is necessary.

Lent is a process of change. May Easter find us a bit different. May Easter find us with renewed courage. May Easter find us with newfound trust in Christ as we remember that to live is to be continually transfigured. Amen.

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Portions adapted from: Joe Wright and Deacon Chris Anderson

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