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## Homily: On the Transfiguration

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THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION  
MARK 9:2-10

Br. James Voeller, fbp

*Nota bene - The glorious event of the Transfiguration prepared the apostles in advance for the passion of Christ. This Gospel narrative in Mark has implications for vocational service. The present reflection is an exhortation for those who preach to "wake up the world".*

When Jesus went up the mountain, like Moses, and was Transfigured before them, Peter wanted to set up three tents. This was in response to Israelite heritage, recalling the Feast of Tabernacles.

We want to connect with the divinity as a many Christians meditate on devotional materials, but if we want to be "*Resurrected*" it is the path Jesus of Nazareth marked out for us that we must follow.

We are preparing for Easter but we have to pass through Good Friday first. The Liturgical reader of today's Gospel recognizes that the preceding narrative was the 1<sup>st</sup> prediction of the passion. It is no coincidence that these narratives have been laid out this way. John Paul II tells us "the Apostles were strengthened for the passion by the Transfiguration." Liturgically we pass through the 1<sup>st</sup> prediction and enter into the glorified vision of Christ today. As we envision the Transfiguration with

Mt Tabor in our minds eye we are Liturgically prepared for the following narratives with two more predictions soon to follow. Is it significant that other exorcisms, teachings on humility and temptations to sin are found “*sandwiched*” between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> predictions. Not only that but marriage and divorce, blessing of the children and the Rich Young Man. As Christ prepares his followers for the Paschal Mystery, we become aware that callings of service such as pastoring or marriage are encapsulated within this narrative.

The apostles are strengthened and prepared for the future by this event. It is an experience of the transcendent entering into their midst. As ministers we face future challenges and at times will not know how to solve these problems. We must make room for the transcendent to enter our lives when there is no place to turn. We can say with the Psalmist “I believed even when I said I am sorely afflicted.”

Peter, James and John are in a privileged place. They are a chosen few of an apparition but through them we have Liturgical access to this transcendent experience.

In our ministry experience we will find ourselves in places of privilege, an inner circle of a pastoral team. There will be blessings and experiences that will prepare us for greater things. We can't stay in those high's though we will meditate on them and refer back to them. We have to come down and be prepared for what's next.

In ministry there are many blessings, opportunities, privileges. Some of those are in the form of relationships, others through liturgy or maybe in our personal private prayer where we commune with God. They all have a purpose and prepare us as we share in the Paschal Mystery. Liturgy can contribute to opening us to the experience of the Transfiguration. One liturgical music reflection recommended appropriate songs for the occasion:

*“Tis Good Lord to be Here”* or *“Transfiguration”* to reflect on the majesty of our faith that was made possible by Christ’s dying for each and every one of us. Ministry is a powerful gift and it comes with its moments, Epiphanies, crosses, and transcendent experiences. We also share in the transcendent experiences of the Body of Christ.

We can be proud of our Christian faith, triumphalist, seeing our faith out of proportion with universal faith. Belonging to God’s chosen community we must recognize that God is at work missionally elsewhere in the world. As a cultic community we tend to minimize other communities of believing people. It is natural to want to possess the fulness of truth. Don’t we all want to be on the winning team, to run for the gold. Look what our God did, do you think that anyone will be converted if this is how we presented our faith? In Jewish theology, there an understanding of universal and particular faith and this is a delicate balance.

We are strengthened for our mission of evangelization by Liturgical reading of today’s Gospel. As homilists we are carrying out this mission. We too share in this experience of the Transfiguration of Christ. It is only something one can imagine or contemplate in scripture.

The story is retold every time in Liturgy for all who are called into our community of believers. If you travel to the Holy Land you will have a vision of this mountain (Tabor) that will remain in your mind’s eye forever.

They heard God’s voice, “this is my beloved son, listen to him.” In Franciscanism we sometimes refer to the founder as the mirror of perfection. St. Francis wanted to be like Christ in every way. We have Pope Francis, so today we are all a little bit Franciscan. When you preach you are asking people to listen to you as a beloved child of God.

But Francis believed more than anything that it is our example that makes us good preachers. He often admonished his followers not to be content with the grace of the ministry. If we only do what comes easily but do not give good example, we are not doing anything out of the ordinary. This pertains to how we prepare, are we making use of some of the practical lessons for preparation? It is all the ways we live out our spirituality in which we are called. It also includes what we do when we are not preaching because we preach by our actions. Even the small things we do, applying the critiques to make our message more well received by our hearers.

Christ's divinity was witnessed by the apostles on Mt Tabor. His light shines through us as we accompany others on their journey toward Easter through our preaching and by our example.

You are called to preach. You are called to proclaim and give witness to the Gospel. Wake up the world!