

Sermon for February 14, 2010
Transfiguration Sunday

Kirke White

Exodus 34:29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-36(37-43)

I'd like to tell you a tall tale! It comes from Rev. Richard Fairchild—one I found while poking around on the internet.

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/c-transe.php>

It seems that a man went hunting for ducks. HE took a new retriever dog with him. From the blind on the bay he shot at and hit a duck and it fell in the water. The retriever bounded over the icy water and brought the duck back to him. The man was stunned -- couldn't believe his eyes!

He shot at and hit another duck. He watched in disbelief as the dog again walked on water out and back. Hardily daring to believe what had happened he went home and asked a neighbor to go with him the next day to hunt. OH! And he told no one.

The next day in the deep dark of early morning the two went out. At light the first man shot a duck. His dog walked on water out and back with the bird. Neither man said a word. In the course of the morning several more hits, and each time the bird was retrieved and not a word was said. Finally, the first man said to his neighbor, "Do you notice anything strange about my dog?"

"Yes," said his friend, "I do. Your dog doesn't know how to swim."

Now Father Bill might appreciate the humor here, but the point I am trying to make is that it is difficult to talk about the transfiguration.

That is the name that the Church uses to describe what happened in this miraculous event. In the Greek it is the word *metamorphosis*. It is a word that describes the holy in the midst of the earthy.

In Luke's account we get the sense that Jesus is praying hard about what is to come. Luke uses the word "exodus," to describe what is about to happen to Jesus in Jerusalem. I remember that other sermons dwell on the

images of Moses, the law giver, and Elijah, the prophet. How they are there to give him support and comfort for this trial that is to come. How they also show Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. I tend to think it is like family and friends gathering around a loved one before they face a major operation -- A time of prayer and release to God of what is beyond us.

There are two others present also: for the scriptures tell us there was a cloud and that Peter James and John were fearful. In the presence of the holy we have the right to be fearful! This numinous cloud represents the presence of the Holy Spirit and the voice from the cloud is the presence of the Father. It is the Trinity.

And then there are the three disciples. In some sense we are like the disciples here. We are sleepy, perhaps this is a metaphor for not being aware of the heavenly things all around us. We are wanting to focus on building programs and not being alert to the one we love. We are drawn up into the what-is proper-to-do rather than the moment of glory.

And when we are not aware there comes a heavenly reminder to Peter, "This is my Son listen to Him." And we like Peter finally begin to get it. It seems that sometimes we need the knock on our head! And after that we go down the mountain with Jesus to the waiting world.

Way back in my and Janet's experiences a beloved priest introduced us to a song, which I think is titled "Mountain tops." It spoke of coming down from the mountain top experience of a transfiguration to the valley below. You can't stay on the mountain tops, you have to go back down to the valley below!

And there the other disciples are failing to cast out a demon. As Jesus comes into sight with the three disciples, an earthly father says to Jesus, "I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child." Such a stark contrast between the Holy Moment on the mountaintop and the earthly moment at the foot of the mountain!

The Italian artist Raphael painted an exquisite, 13 X 9 foot, altarpiece depicting the contrast. <http://www.raphaelsanzio.org/The-Transfiguration.html> You may want to look at it on the internet. Above is the luminous figure of Jesus with Elijah and Moses. At their feet are the sleepy disciples. Down below is the chaotic, dark, jumble of figures: disciples, onlookers, the man, his son in despair. In their midst, two figures point toward the mountain and the sky. The observer sees the transfigured Jesus shining in white. This is Emmanuel, who will come down from the mountain to be with them to heal and bring life to the boy.

It seems to me that the faith and action of our church is to be like those two figures—pointing to the Transfigured Jesus.

In recent days I have had my eyes opened wider to the ministry of Emmanuel as a parish and of the individuals who give their bit of talent, time and treasure to the service of the Lord. We reach out to others, in feeding programs, building programs, and healing programs. It is a part of our spirit as a parish to reach out internationally, locally, and in support of regional ministries. We seek, as disciples, to allow the joy and love of sharing Jesus Christ, to move through us out into the world which is chaotic and needy. And, yes, we share the gifts of Eucharist, worship, prayer and fellowship. And these gifts propel us like Jesus did to sacrifice and action to work for justice and peace.

As we enter the season of Lent, as we focus on the journey that Jesus made to Jerusalem on the behalf of the world, let us look to the Transfigured One, the shining One, who loves us more that we can know. And in whom Heaven and earth will be joined eternally.

AND let us think and take on some additional responsibility to show who we are. Visit someone. Take part in a ministry that needs help. Focus on prayer by supporting with your presence here at church the Lenten offerings of special services for Morning and Evening Prayer.

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

Amen.