

## **Transfiguration=Transformation**

February 28, 2021, Second Sunday of Lent

Gospel of Mark 9:2-10

Fr. John

When I was a kid, one of my childhood heroes was the comic book phenom - SUPERMAN. He was the man of steel that flew faster than a speeding bullet and was more powerful than a locomotive. But I also remember that the other identity of Superman was the rather bland and ordinary Clark Kent - the mild mannered reporter for the Daily Planet newspaper. Whenever danger threatened anyone, Clark Kent would find a place [usually a telephone booth] to quickly change into his Superman persona, take on his super-human powers and arrive just in the nick of time to save someone from impending disaster. [There are shades here of God's angel's last second rescue of Isaac]. However what intrigued me was the fact that Kent was able to keep his identity as Superman a secret - even from his closest friends and work colleagues by being almost the opposite in terms of power and strength from the 'caped crusader'.

Perhaps there is a certain analogy that could be made here with the historical Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ who could even conquer death. While Jesus was known or reputed to have healed the sick and performed other miracles, there were other 'faith healers' and magicians around at that time who could also perform seemingly superhuman feats and equally amaze people. Furthermore, in many cases, Jesus shied away from public displays of power lest he be regarded as only a showman and be distracted from the real message he was trying to convey.

His inner circle of followers, up to the event of the transfiguration, admired him as a wonderful, wise and even charismatic mentor. But they really had no idea who they were really dealing with and therefore were certainly puzzled about his comment on his 'rising from the dead'.

So, halfway through the gospel of St. Mark, three disciples are given a sneak preview of the Christ - the One Who would emerge from the tomb on resurrection day - the Universal Christ Who is 'all in all and within all - the Alpha and Omega - the Beginning and the End'. One could almost hear them saying to each other as they descended from the mountain: 'Did we really see what we thought we just saw!'

The phenomenon of witnessing something of the Divine is sometimes referred to as a 'theophany' - an experience of God that somehow shakes or awakens us to seeing life, the world and others in a completely different light.

Our sophisticated, modern, scientific western culture tries to downplay these experiences because of its fear of anything over which it has no complete control. But we know from surveys that study these things, that they are much more common than we think.

Perhaps the account of the Transfiguration, coming so early in the Lenten season may prod us to recognize the validity of small theophanies in our lives as well. Brief glimpses of the eternal God that whet our appetite to not only draw closer to that God but also to recognize His presence in each other and in the world He has given us.

Even though God seems to demand much of us in faith as He did in testing Abraham's faith. Yet ultimately He comes to our rescue - as St. Paul says: 'If God is for us, who can be against us.'

So, as the disciples saw Jesus in a new light, may we see each other in a similar way. And may this be something of the 'new normal' people will envision once we come through the time of the Covid virus pandemic.

We may not have the powers of a comic book superhero. However, once we have a glimpse of the power of God's love - we can be moved to accomplish great things for our fellow human beings through our prayer, our fasting, and almsgiving in whatever forms these may take.

The transfiguration of Jesus, like his resurrection is not just an event that involved him - it is an invitation for all of us to be a part of it, not just as amazed spectators but as transformed and active participants.