

February 19, 2023

Matthew 17:1-9

¹Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves.

²And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Child, the Beloved; with whom I am well pleased; listen to him!”

⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” ⁸And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Child of Humanity has been raised from the dead.”

Transfiguration, traditionally, is about seeing the divinity of Jesus Christ, fully divine – not new

My epiphany: What if Jesus is not only one transfigured?

What does Jesus Christ, fully human, have to do with this?

Well, we too experience transfigurations

Granted: Jesus’ Transfiguration is with a capital-T, but I’m not the same person I was when I was 20 (Thank God!)

Epiphany leads to Transfiguration – epiphanies lead to transfigurations

Our transfiguration happens by our going back down the mountain

I could relate many personal transformation stories, but will limit it to two:

I used to say, “I want my children to have children just like them.” It was a revenge statement, born out of sleepless nights when they were quite young.

Then they went through their teen years – an epiphany. I now say, “I want my children to have children so they know how much I love them.”

I changed, was transfigured, love took on new meaning, it broadened and deepened my understanding and relationship with God, who is Love

The other example was a harder lesson.

I butted heads, for years, with a theologically conservative colleague. He was welcome in my theological afterlife, I was not welcome in his. It bothered me. Until I realized, how small my faith was. I was allowing his faith to determine mine.

When I could let go, trust in my beliefs and allow him his, all resentment was released, I was set free, transfigured. I am now able to welcome in a new, loving way those whose beliefs are different from my own.

In both of these cases transfiguration came about as I put the “epiphany” into action.

Yes, these were “mountaintop” experiences (maybe not as high a mountain as Jesus’s), but they took on meaning as I, like Peter, James, and John, went back down the mountain, back to daily living – which meant putting into practice the new insights into love and faith that I was given.

Jesus’s story of transfiguration is more than about his divinity – it is about our humanity

Yes, we are called to go to the mountaintop, to set aside time to pray, to open ourselves to God, to be open to important epiphanies

And, then, trusting in God, to go back down the mountain and live out our new knowledge, because that is how we will be transfigured, and the world with us.

May God bless us as we prepare to enter the season of Lent, the liturgical time set aside to leave the mountaintop and to put into practice the epiphanies of our lives. Amen.