

About a thousand years ago, I taught religion to Catholic children attending public school. We gathered every Saturday morning from 9:00 to 11:00. (You can imagine how popular that was). In theory, it was to provide the religion lessons they were missing by not attending a Catholic school. In practice, it was often very difficult to generate any enthusiasm for the lessons.

I can still remember, however, the lesson on the Transfiguration for our six year old's. We talked about light, shiny clothes, God's happiness, and what it meant to us, as followers of the Christ, the Messiah.

At the end of all the talking, we sang "This Little Light of Mine" and the children drew a picture of what the Transfiguration meant to them. One little girl drew three candles – the candles on the right and left were blank, but on the candle in the middle she had drawn curly bangs, two eyes and big, big smile. That was Jesus, sharing his Happy Place. Highly respected theologians, when speaking about the Transfiguration event use terms like "Parousia", and "Shekina" and "pericope", but to me the best terminology is Jesus sharing his Happy Place.

These days, my Saturday religion class has transfigured into Sunday Bible Study and in last Sunday's bible study, we answered three questions:

- How did the disciples benefit from the Transfiguration;
- how did Jesus benefit;
- and how do we benefit.

We decided the disciples benefited because it helped them understand who Jesus really is.

Jesus' concern that his followers understand who he is, is what triggered that trek to the top of the mountain. If we go back a few verses prior to what we read as Gospel this evening, Jesus asks his disciples "Who do people say I am?" And they answer – "some say you are John the Baptist, others say you are Elijah, while others say you are one of the prophets."

And then, probing for the truth, Jesus asks: "Who do you say I am" He's really asking: who do you "believe" I am. And Peter replies: You are the Christ – the Messiah. At this point in his understanding, Peter may have been referring to the Davidic Tradition: that Jesus was

the ancestor of David and entitled and expected to be a great King, a defeater of Romans, and the ruler of an earthly Kingdom.

This is the moment when Jesus begins Phase 2 of his disciple boot camp. He needs them to understand what is going to happen shortly in Jerusalem and what will happen after.

He tells them he must suffer much, will be put to death, but then three days later, would be raised to life. The “suffering and death” part would certainly be understandable to the disciples. They grew up under Roman rule and had seen plenty of it. But the “raised to life” part may have been just a bit disconcerting.

They probably did a lot of talking amongst themselves in the week or so that Jesus let pass before he went up to the mountain to pray, taking Peter, John and James with him.

And as they stood there, any doubt in their minds as to who Jesus is had to have been burnt away in the white heat of the revelation of the glory that is God inside the Christ, and the confirmation that “This is my Son, Whom I Have Chosen: Listen to Him.”

Before the need for Thomas to see the wounds, there was the need for Peter, John and James to see the Christ. To know, that not Moses, not Elijah, but God the Son was hanging on that cross. Our second question: Even though the same Jesus who went up the mountain was the same Jesus who came down -- How did the Transfiguration benefit Jesus? The theologian Karl Rahner says: "In the dark night of hopelessness, the light of God shines and a human heart finds in God the power that turns a dying into victory and redemption for the world."

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If that is the meaning of the transfiguration for Jesus, what is the meaning for us? We each have our own answer, but there is the need for us to know as well. To "know" that God the Son was sacrificed, and died, for us. That truly, through him, with him, and in him we move and have our being.

I said earlier that the Jesus who went up the mountain was the same Jesus who came down. The disciples were not the same. They told no one what they had seen. But I would expect, that like Mary, they pondered these things in their hearts.

“Pondering” is a good thing. It can result in prayer, in thinking, and sometimes just resting in the heart of God. Pondering reveals the Kingdom of God. And the Kingdom of God isn’t sitting in a tent on a mountain top. The Kingdom of God is a mustard seed that just keeps growing. It’s a lump of yeast, that just keeps growing.

Eucharistic Prayer C offers a compelling insight: “Deliver us from the presumption of coming to this Table for solace only, and not for strength; for pardon only, and not for renewal.

The Kingdom of God is fertile ground waiting for US to come and to reveal to others our God light within.

Water, oil, and blood were spilled not only for the disciples, but for us. Through the water of baptism, we are buried and reborn as children of God and inheritors of the Kingdom. We are anointed with oil and marked as Christ’s own forever.

Our God Light Shines because

WE ARE SHOT THROUGH WITH THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Church celebrates August 6th as the Feast of the Transfiguration -- a God Made Event of overwhelming light, power, cloud and revelation.

The world commemorates August 6th as Hiroshima Day.
A Man-Made Event of overwhelming light, power, cloud and destruction.

And I think of the picture of three candles and Jesus wearing a smile because he's in his happy place.

Please consider lighting a candle at dinner this evening. Thank God for the gift of Transfiguration, the gift of Redemption and offer a prayer for peace.

Amen.