

Transfiguration 2017
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Deacon Dick Folger presents an interesting thought about today's Gospel. We know Peter was excited to be in the presence of his transfigured Lord, with Moses and Elijah on either side. He was so excited that he was probably babbling, trying to make sense of it all. But Deacon Folger wonders if Peter, upon witnessing this spectacle, didn't think, if not ask Jesus directly: "How'd you do that?"

Remember back near the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus heard the voice of God claiming Him as His Son. Now, it is not just Jesus hearing the voice from the heavens; the three apostles also hear it – they hear God affirming Jesus as the Beloved Son; they, and us, are to listen to Him.

Mary McGlone suggests that the vision on the mountain told the three that all Jesus had been doing – the controversy, the healings, the teachings, the breaking of bread – everything He did pleased God. It was almost as if they heard again the words of Genesis: "God saw that it was very good." And maybe, when the voice told them to listen to Jesus, God was telling Peter to stop talking about tents and such and just keep listening to the voice of God, as expressed through Jesus.

Notice that the voice does not tell them to worship Jesus or adore Him or even praise Him. They are to listen to Him, to follow Him and let that experience transform their hearts. As Ted Wolgamot reminds us the heavenly voice isn't just informing us that Jesus is God's Son to provide information. The voice is encouraging us to understand and live out the message that we are all God's sons and daughters. Despite some terrible sorrows and considerable pain that we may have to endure, we can now trust that in the end all will be well.

Over a hundred years ago the Blessed Metropolitan Anthony, a Russian Orthodox prelate, preached about this feast saying that the goal of the Lord's revelation was to persuade His followers that they too are to shine with the beauty of God's love. The prelate said that people longed for the Christ

who would reveal fearsome majesty while Jesus offered them simple humanity which has more potential for glory than we can ever imagine.

Blessed Anthony told his listeners to look around them, to see people who had been transformed. He told them to notice in their faces, their eyes, their tone of voice that which is infinitely attractive. In essence, Anthony told them and tells us: “Listen to them! Learn from how they have learned to live as God’s beloved and are empowered to love as we are loved.”

In His transfigured state, Jesus is the image of what humanity was created to be and to experience. In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis describes this when he says: “Thanks to this encounter with God’s love, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being.”

Rev. Donna Schaper remembers a quarrel with one of her wealthier parishioners who wanted to put a carillon in the steeple. Schaper wanted funding for a homeless shelter in the building which housed 150+ people a night. The woman refused –the carillon went in. The first night it played at 10 PM; then she ran into a neighbor who was executive director of the methadone clinic next door. The woman had tears in her eyes and when asked why, she said, “The music is so beautiful. It pierces the sky. It is going to help me get through the day.”

The steeple became a kind of transfiguring mountain for the woman, allowing her to look up and over all the problems she faced. Schaper concludes by suggesting that perhaps we all need a carillon next door. Or a song we listen to or sing every day as a way to remind us of who we are and who we want to become. After all, God doesn’t ask much of us. He just wants us to be His sons and daughters, loving each other the way He loves each of us.