

March 8, 2020
Second Sunday of Lent

Here are two things that we could ask after reading the story of the Transfiguration. What changed? Who changed?

What Changed? Clearly, the *appearance* of Jesus changed. The Gospel tells us, “his face became like the sun and his clothes became white as light.” His appearance would have been too much for Peter, James and John to look at for longer than just a few seconds. The *appearance* of their environment changed. A bright cloud casts a shadow over them and God speaks to them from the cloud, “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.” That overwhelming experience sent Peter, James and John to fall on their faces. God revealed His power over everything, over every darkness, over all light. The Apostles fall to the ground in the presence of God, now revealed in God’s beloved Son, Jesus. No wonder they were afraid at this experience the power of God far beyond what they ever could have imagined before. The power of God came through the change of *appearance* of Jesus at the transfiguration.

The power of God is much more than just appearances. We come to know the power of God through a personal encounter, a conversion, the change of our hearts and minds. *Who changed?* Jesus didn’t really change. The same Jesus who humbled himself to be born in a stable is the same Jesus who was transfigured before Peter, James and John. You might say that Jesus “was transfigured” when he was born as one of us. The invisible God was now made visible in the humanity of Christ. The transfiguration was the revelation of the divinity of Christ that has always has been. Jesus is the same before and after the Transfiguration. *Who changed?* Peter most especially as well as James and John.

How do they change? Gradually and in God's perfect grace. Sometimes there are events with Jesus that open their eyes to a reality that is new and unexplainable except through faith. They witness the glory of the Transfiguration to give the strength that they need from Jesus, as we hear in the Preface from today's Mass, "to show, even by the testimony of the law and the prophets, that the Passion leads to the glory of the Resurrection." (Preface for the Second Sunday of Lent.) They do not fully understand the meaning of the glory of Jesus and Jesus knows it so he charged them not to tell anyone what they experienced until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

Who changed at the Transfiguration? That small community of three of the Apostles. We change together with them gradually and with God's perfect grace in this Lenten season. We know that Peter, James and John eventually *did* tell about their experience of the Transfiguration a part of their testimony about Jesus' resurrection. We know the glory of the Lord not by the testimony of just one person or the three who climbed the mountain with Jesus, but because of the testimony of all the Apostles, of many witnesses, men and women who experienced Jesus in his resurrected body. The encounter of the resurrected Lord completely transformed them. As Abbot Jeremy Driscoll points out, the resurrection answers three important questions. *Who is God? **God*** is the one who did not abandon his Son at his death. *Who is Jesus? **Jesus*** is the one raised by the Father and established as Lord and Messiah. *Who are we? **We*** are his witnesses. (cf. *Awesome Glory, Resurrection in Scripture, Liturgy and Theology* by Jeremy Driscoll, p. 27.)

We are his witnesses in the face of very danger, including the corona virus. God who did not abandon Jesus on the cross will not abandon us. God who raised his Son Jesus will also raise us up. We take all recommended precautions, but we do not panic because Jesus is Lord and Messiah.

