

Jesus' Transformation and the Gift of Change

To transfigure something means to transform or change it. We witness transformations and change everyday of our lives; although we often resist its occurrence. The wise person will realize that it is by transformation and change that we grow and can stretch ourselves to full potential. Very simple acts of nature attest to this truth. A tree must lose its leaves and hibernate before it can sprout new life and grow again. We must die to this earthly life before we can rise eternally.

Today's story of the transfiguration of Jesus has all of the drama and content of change. First, there is the transfiguration itself. This powerful event is followed by dialogue, a realization of "rightness and purpose," doubt and fear and finally, questioning. It is a story not only about the transformation that happened to Jesus, but of the transformation happening within the disciples. Their understanding of who Jesus is and who they are is beginning to change as well.

The disciples are beginning to realize, ever so slightly, that Jesus is not going to fulfill their messianic expectations by conquering earthly rulers and becoming an earthly king. His mission, as verified by God the Father, is to suffer, die and rise; thus establishing a heavenly reign. Jesus as Messiah calls those who follow to change; a change that effects the way they think, the way they live and the way they feel. It is the ongoing change or transformation that occurs when one embarks on the journey of conversion of mind, heart and soul.

And, this story of the Transfiguration of Jesus has all of the elements of what we experience when undergoing change. We very rarely choose the direction our life shall take in total isolation. We formulate our principles based on what we have learned, received through tradition and discussed with others. It is then, through this process of discernment and dialogue, that we make choices. As Christians, we want to have a dialogue with the Gospels, our faith tradition, our fellow believers and with God Himself. It is only then that we can make wise choices and embark upon our life of conversion; being ever so slowly transformed into the perfection to which we are called.

Even though this journey may first be met with resistance, we soon realize a certain "rightness or goodness" about what we are doing. The Christian philosophy of life begins to ring true to our experience and our ultimate purpose. It can give form and shape to our lives, releasing us from the insecurity that haphazard living and uninformed choices can bring. Often people feel empty and even depressed because they lack authentic goals and direction. This is one of the best life lessons that those who have obtained a certain wisdom can share with our young people.

Once we have embraced the true Christian way of life, loving God, self, and others, and we

feel “good” about doing so, we still experience fear. It is difficult to leave our old ways of doing things behind in search for the sometimes unknown. It is difficult to take the risk of love and anxiety can be real. It is also fearful to stand alone in a culture that wants to do things differently; embodying an opposite value system than our own. Living and worshipping in a community that supports our common cause can reduce this fear, but it is nonetheless inevitable with any life changing decision.

In order to change effectively, we need the constant reassurance that what we are doing is right. We need to hear God say to us through our community, through Scripture and in our hearts that “this is my beloved Son, listen to him!” We constantly question, because of our human nature, whether embracing suffering will really lead to resurrection. We wonder whether opening ourselves to criticism or persecution will actually lead to fulfillment. And, we wonder and question whether divesting ourselves of self concern and focusing on the needs of the poor is wise.

With every transformation or change there is new growth, but always new questions. As we discover one new aspect of ourselves or make one new self adjustment, life continues to immerse us in its mystery and provide more questions for our search. Our hearts will continue to be restless until the rest in God, but we can possess a true self assurance and inner peace knowing we have chosen the right Way.

It is the very wisdom of the church that states that a Lenten season is needed each year precisely for this purpose of goal setting and reassurance. If we could obtain perfection and keep our paths straight for the totality of our lives, we could have one Lent and be done with it! But, we know this is not possible. In the midst of all that life demands of us, we consistently have to take the time for self denial, redirection and change. The traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are perfect ways to accomplish this task.

What needs transformation and change this year? This is a question we must consistently ask in order to allow God to work on our hearts. Perhaps my attitudes toward contemporary moral issues need adjustment. Maybe my relationships with others are too flawed or filled with baggage. I may need to work on forgiveness and learn to love others more; even those I find most difficult to love. The poor always need attention and I may have the resources to share more of what I have with them. Possibly I am in a position of influence and can have a positive effect on our world and the values it holds. There is so much to examine, dialogue about, listen to, stand in awe of and change!

Sometimes, a person’s heart is so filled with hurt and anger that change is doubly difficult. The path toward transformation can be rocky and the mountain we must climb can be really high. There can be too much pain to acknowledge or too much hurt that must be let go. We wonder perhaps if we have the energy or even the desire to give the journey a shot; questioning what the end result will be like. At times, I may find myself afraid to even look within and acknowledge what is really there. Is there anyone in my life that truly loves me

enough not only to accept who I am but help me get where I need to go?

We are called, as people of faith, to reach out to those who find life most difficult. It is also our charge, if we are going to meet success, to reach out to one who can help us carry and unpack our load. There is always a way through even the darkest of nights and a light at the end of every journey no matter how difficult or treacherous. This is one joyous truth our faith can teach. Let us console one another with this message.

In conclusion, we are given this wonderful opportunity for self adjustment and change. Realize that it is our human nature to resist this work and try to rise above our initial impulse and inclination to maintain the status quo. Establish a picture of yourself as a transformed person and ask God and others how this is best achieved. Focus on the vision of Jesus Christ for our world and the heavenly Jerusalem that awaits us all. And with the dawn of Easter joy, may we be able to confess with full mind and heart that Jesus has indeed risen from the dead!