

Transfiguration Sunday
February 15, 2015

Transfiguration. Jesus climbs to the top of the mountain, and there he is revealed in all God's glory. Transfiguration is more than an Epiphany event in the life of Jesus; it is a place we are called to seek in our lives. But you can't get there by climbing mountains. Transfiguration is a place of the heart and those who would journey there must do so by faith.

Glimpses of Transfiguration. To fully appreciate the Transfiguration experience revealed in the gospels requires, I believe, a different approach. "Transfiguration" can be better arrived at by looking for corollaries that capture more of the essence of the experience. Here are a couple of possible angles—glimpses, if you will, "through a glass darkly".

1. I read this novel "Thud" set in fictional "Discworld" by Terry Pratchett. It begins with a cryptic inscription I really like about a character known as 'Mr. Shine'.

"Him who mountain crush him no
Him who sun him stop him no
Him who hammer him break him no
Him who fire him fear him no
Him who raise him heart above him head
Him Diamond."

2. I want to share with you the best word to describe "Transfiguration": apotheosis. Unusual, not really used much in regular conversation, but the best fit, really. "Apotheosis" is from the Latin 'apotheosis' and the Greek 'apotheosis', according to the Oxford English Dictionary. It derives from two roots-'apo' meaning change and 'theosis' meaning divine or God-like. Loosely defined, Apotheosis means '*exaltation, ascension into Glory, transformation to divine*'. "**Apotheosis**" is the word for Transfiguration Sunday.
3. In the animated film, "Kung Fu Panda", a day dreaming, bungling panda receives a startling Epiphany—he is the "Dragon Warrior", destined to be the greatest Kung Fu Master. No one believes it, not the Furious Five Kung Fu Masters; not Shifu, the temple master who is to train him; not even Po, the panda who is a combination of ineptitude, distraction and clumsiness. But when danger comes to the Valley of Peace in the form of a warrior superior to all the abilities of the Kung Fu masters combined, Po must confront his destiny. To help him prepare, he is given the Dragon Warrior Scroll containing the hidden, secret knowledge of terrible strength and power that only the Dragon Warrior may possess, the power to defeat all enemies. Opening it, Po discovers the scroll is blank and empty inside. Well, not exactly blank, the scroll contains a mirrored surface. Looking at it, Po sees only himself. In the ensuing battle, Po is tested and discovers the real truth, He becomes the "Dragon Warrior", *he becomes himself*, and he emerges from the rubble and swirling clouds of dust, exalted to "Dragon Warrior".
4. Albert Camus Quote-
"In the midst of winter, I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer."
5. A movie critic once observed that there is a common theme running through American cinemas, the same basic theme in every movie—'*Be Yourself*'. It derives from the philosopher Socrates

encounter of the Oracle at Delphi. The Oracle reveals the ultimate wisdom to Socrates and confers on him the knowledge that makes him the wisest person in all Athens. The Delphi Oracle tells Socrates: *'Know Yourself'*. In American cinema, the protagonist, whether adult, child, animal or animated character goes on a journey of self-discovery, trials and challenges; adventures that leads to a new understanding of themselves and they discover who they truly are. They have a transfiguration moment: *'Be Yourself'*.

Transfiguration. A journey of the heart-*'This is who I am, this is why I am here, this is what I stand for'*.

Jesus goes up on the mountain to encounter God, to enter into dialogue through prayer. He is transfigured before his disciples, bright, shining as the sun. Jesus achieves his apotheosis, revealed in this Epiphany for who he truly is, and why he is here among us. Peter wants to build 3 tents-- to stay. But this is not Christ's final revelation; there is another mountain to climb, and a different apotheosis to come, where he will be lifted up on the cross.

This transfiguration is not for Jesus, it is for his disciples-it is for you and me. In the orthodox liturgy for Epiphany, the mystery of God's purpose in the birth of Christ is proclaimed. "God became human so that we would become divine." Transfiguration reveals Jesus to be our future, our destiny in God.

Each of us takes a journey in our lives, a journey of self-discovery into the unknown territory of ourselves. Our path in life is not a given, our purpose is not revealed at birth. *Who am I? Why am I here? What am I called to do?* We grow up with questions, but no given answers. The journey of faith is an inward journey to discover the *who, why and what* of our very being; it is a journey of the heart.

Lent starts on Wednesday, Ash Wednesday. Forty days Jesus lived in the desert, alone, fasting, praying, and seeking God's purpose for his life so that he would become what God intended for him. God has a plan for your life, an invitation to your future. For forty days you and I are invited to enter into our Lenten discipline, a time of reflection, renewal, a deeper and closer walk with our God so that, you too, might better understand *who you are, why you are here, what you are called to do*. Faith is a journey toward transfiguration, to apotheosis, to that point where your life, purpose and truth come together and you shine.

You can't think yourself there. You can't reason or explain or logically plan your life's purpose apart from God. You can journey there in faith, an inward journey of the heart to where God confronts you in your very soul.

"You who raise your heart above your head, You diamond."
Shine.