

**TRANSFIGURATION 2014**  
**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**2 PETER 1.13 ST. LUKE 9.28**

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What started this chapter in the life of Jesus and his friends? They went camping on a mountain and then something surprising happened.

The Baptism and Transfiguration are two of the five milestones in the life of Jesus...the others being the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and the Ascension. They are all important moments in the life of Jesus and none stand alone...the Life of Jesus has to be seen in its totality.

Pope Callistus III declared August 6 a universal feast day in the Western Church in 1056. In the modern liturgical calendar used by some churches, the Transfiguration is observed toward the end of the Epiphany season. There is some logic to that practice...the Transfiguration is indeed an Epiphany...a showing...of who Jesus is.

The Gospels tell us that after Jesus was baptized he went away to spend some time by himself in the mountains before starting his public ministry in earnest. Mountains are where people went to pray and get closer to God. Even today mountains evoke a sense of mystery and awe, especially if they are cloud-covered. We still go to mountains to pray today.

By all accounts Jesus' public ministry was a failure. Initial enthusiasm over his message of hope had disappeared. Only a few people were left to hear what he had to say. Once again Jesus goes up into a mountain...but this time he takes his three closest friends with him. Peter, James and John witnessed first-hand what none of the other Apostles witnessed. Luke tells us Jesus' whole appearance changed; his face was bright like the sun...his clothes "dazzling white".

Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus but do not talk directly to the Apostles...instead they talk to Jesus about his impending death. Peter, James and John are witnessing a miracle they do not understand...the presence of Moses and Elijah confirming for Jesus what he already knew...he had a mission to complete and he knew how it was going to end.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration teaches us that as good as the Ten Commandments and the prophetic writings are, Jesus is better, and reconciliation to God the Father comes through him and him alone. The Apostles hear God's voice, "This is my own dear Son, listen to what he has to say". Jesus is God's messenger and mouthpiece...and the message for the Apostles and for us..."pay attention to what he says".

The Transfiguration of Jesus is the prelude to Jesus' own Death and Resurrection. The bright-shining Jesus of the Transfiguration gives us a preview of Jesus breaking the bonds of sin and death and darkness...replacing them with forgiveness and life and light.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is the pivotal moment for all humankind, the point where human nature meets God...the place where earth meets heaven. Jesus is the permanent bridge between earth and heaven...better than the ladder in Jacob's dream where he saw angels traveling between heaven and earth. Jesus is the one who makes God known to us through himself...so that we might one day see God in heaven...face-to-face...for ourselves...and we won't have to turn away.

The lesson we learn from the Transfiguration of Jesus on a mountain is the same lesson the Apostles learned and later passed on to others. The Transfiguration ultimately points to our own transfigurations and resurrections in glorious and perfect bodies in heaven.

In a very real way we experience the Transfiguration and Resurrection and a healthy dose of heaven-on-earth at every Mass...in Word and Sacrament. That makes what we experience here today a pivotal moment for all of us because we are acknowledging what we believe to be true about Jesus.

When they left the mountain Jesus told his friends not to talk about what they had just seen...but they did anyway. We are told to talk...not to remain silent.

Good news is to be shared!

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