

## TRANSFIGURATION/X TRINITY 2015

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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2 PETER 1.13 St. LUKE 9.28

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Who is Jesus? Throughout his public ministry there was rampant speculation about Jesus from the crowds that followed him and even from his disciples.

About a week before the Transfiguration, Jesus asked his disciples what people were saying about him. His disciples answered some said he was John the Baptist, or Elijah, or another great prophet. But Jesus asked them who they thought he was. It is Peter who answers and calls Jesus the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

Jesus had been revealing himself all along through his teachings, his actions and his miracles. And yet the question about who Jesus was remained hot on everyone's lips...even his disciples. Who is Jesus? Now God the Father would answer the question definitively and once and for all time.

The Baptism and Transfiguration of Jesus are the two events recorded in Scripture when God the Father speaks and identifies Jesus as his much-loved Son. The two events are the bookends of the public ministry of Jesus.

After his Baptism, Jesus went off by himself into the mountains to pray and prepare himself for his public ministry. The Transfiguration marks the end of his public ministry, which by all accounts was a dismal failure.

At the Transfiguration, Jesus again goes off into a mountain to pray. He takes his closest friends, Peter, James and John, with him, who promptly fall asleep. When they wake up, they see Jesus in his full glory and Moses and Elijah are standing with him. Luke tells us Jesus' whole appearance changed; his face was "bright like the sun...his clothes "dazzling white".

The Transfiguration of Jesus is a pivotal moment for all humanity. It is a miracle that happens to Jesus and we get to witness it through the eyes of Peter, James and John. It is the point where human nature meets God and for a brief moment the humanity of Jesus gives way so his Godhead can shine through.

Moses and Elijah have something to say too...but not to the disciples. Their role in the miracle of the Transfiguration is to talk to Jesus about his impending death in Jerusalem. The appearance of Moses and Elijah teaches us that as good as the Law and the Prophets were, Jesus is better, because it is only through him we are reconciled to God the Father.

Who is Jesus? God the Father answers that question definitively and once and for all time. He ends all speculation about who Jesus is. He calls Jesus his much-loved Son with whom he is pleased, and to listen to him. God the Father does not say listen to Jesus and Moses and Elijah...he says to listen to Jesus. The message could not be clearer.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is connected to his own Death, Resurrection and Ascension. None of the events in the life of Jesus are stand-alone events. They all speak to the totality of Jesus' life and mission. The bright-shining Jesus of the Transfiguration gives us a preview of Jesus breaking the bonds of sin and death and darkness and replacing them with forgiveness and life and light.

We believe in the Transfiguration of Jesus because of the eyewitness testimony of Peter and the others. Peter writes he is not telling a made up story...he is telling the truth about what he and the others saw for themselves. The Transfiguration points to our own resurrections when our bodies will be transfigured...transformed into the glorious and perfect bodies we will wear in heaven.

Saint John was the only Gospel writer present at the Transfiguration. He talks about what was revealed to him in the powerful words we hear in the Last Gospel read at the end of every Mass:

*"The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son."*

Who is Jesus? He is God's much-loved Son. We experience his love here and now in Word and Sacrament. Let's listen to him and what he has to say in our lives? And then let's go and tell others.

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