Tr9(2021Transfig.)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**:

*" O God, who on the mount didst reveal to chosen witnesses thine only-begotten Son wonderfully transfigured in raiment white and glistering…".*

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Today is the eve of commemorating our Lord’s Transfiguration. While long a major feast day in the Eastern Church, the Transfiguration did not enter the Western Church until the cusp of the Reformation. Thus, it was not included in the Church of England's reformed calendar, and did not enter the American Church calendar until the 1892 revision of the Book of Common Prayer.

As we might remember, in the days preceding his Transfiguration Jesus had taught many people for several days and performed the miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, again, separate and distinct from the feeding of the Four thousand done farther from Capernaum. Jesus decided then to take Peter, James, and John up into a mountain to pray.

As we heard in our Gospel what happened next was “otherworldly”. In short, our Lord started glowing. Orthodox Bishop Kallistos Ware has written that on the Mount of the Transfiguration Jesus gave his inner circle a glimpse of what mankind looked like BEFORE the Fall in Eden! Given how we each appear today, one has a better grip on the magnitude of man’s Fall. Not as big as Lucifer’s, but …**wow**.

But why not take all the apostles? Well, it may have been a bit of a test. We might remember that the other apostles were upset when John and James' mother sought to have her sons sit at Jesus' right and left hands in heaven. We might remember our Lord scolded the ten.

Beyond that, within any human organization there tend to be certain members that are more integral than others. Peter, James & John, and perhaps Andrew seem to have been Jesus' inner circle. Similarly, as we get ready for REAL football again, one just knows that star QBs gets a little more time and attention from coaches and staff than does a backup lineman.

Yet, unlike most human organizations, any "favoritism" by Jesus was not a source of envy or jealousy within the group. St. John, while being in the inner circle as the disciple whom Jesus loved, still records in his Gospel times when St. Peter, not himself, is singled out by Jesus. Again, the disciples got mad at James and John about favoritism when their mother showed up trying to secure them a place of honor, but they were **not** mad at Jesus.

Secondly, the Transfiguration is one of five times in Jesus' life when only a handful of people witnessed heavenly **affirmations** of Christ's divinity, not everyone. The Apostles were not at his birth when the angels sang which the shepherds heard but apparently not Jesus' own parents. At his baptism only St. John the Baptist for certain both **saw** the dove **and** heard the voice proclaim that this was God's beloved son, while others simply heard a thunderclap. Upon his resurrection several women **disciples** had an angel speak to them, but not the male **apostles**, and Jesus spoke personally to Mary Magdalene before John or even Peter. Only at his Ascension was the Apostolic "gang all there".

From this we can learn that we need to rely upon, and work with each **other**, as a team, as the Apostles did. St. Paul wrote about there being diversities of ministries and gifts, but just one body. There should be no jealousy in the foot that it is not the heart or brain, and there is not to be jealousy that someone else is a gifted theologian and I am not.

We should know this to be true from every day life. No team has 11 quarterbacks at the line or 11 place-kickers. Soccer and hockey each have one goalie per side. And no matter how long and hard one trains, most great athletes are never Olympians.

In monasteries one sees both **Do**-ers and **Pray**-ers, ala Mary and Martha. They need each other. The Do-ers can not simply do the monastery’s farmwork without people praying (or they might as well just leave and become farmers), and the Pray-ers can’t pray all day long unless somebody does the dishes.

Within the Church this means that not everyone is called to be priest or Deacon. We may have heard of the "universal priesthood of believers". This has caused no small amount of confusion in the Church in recent decades including with women's ordination. It comes from St. Peter's statement in his first letter to the early Church: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation".

Luther picked up on this and ran with it to significantly blur distinctions between clergy and laity. Yet the Roman, Orthodox, and Traditional Anglican churches believe that such universal priesthood runs to all believers for the protection and **propagation** of the Gospel.

In this vein every one of us is **differently** called to serve each other and, thereby, the Church (and God). Pruests don't get to sit in the pews, sing in the choir, play the organ, or be acolytes (except back at seminary). Neither does such universal priesthood mean everyone gets a chance to be the Sunday preacher. That might well actually HURT the Gospel message, such as explaining why Jesus and the others even went up the mountain.

Why did the four of them go up the mountain? We heard they went up to **pray**. Praying is helped by solitude, as one sees in monasteries. Mountains, except during storms tend to be very quiet. So Jesus, who assuredly knew what was coming—the display of his Divinity—thought prayer was important **first**. So, once again we see the Son God, himself praying. The Gospels record Jesus praying a LOT, most memorably in Gethsemane.

Probably each one of us has met people who have given up on God and no longer pray because He didn't answer their prayers. But we know, as ones who haven't abandoned the Church, that as the saying goes, "the Lord works in mysterious ways."

We know that people whose prayers apparently were not answered may have "lucked out" in the long run since they might have been seeking something not actually good for them. They might have prayed for someone to become their spouse or to win a certain job. But, over time and hindsight they came to see that their supposed ill fortune saved them from disaster.

Or, their prayer might actually have been answered but just not in the style or manner they had hoped or anticipated. Maybe they got a good job with about the same pay they hoped for, but had to move from Chicago to, say, Colorado or Nebraska where unforeseeable opportunities and tests awaited.

We ran into this ourselves. If I had not moved back to our house in Ft. Collins with our younger son, Rick, for school reasons--leaving Anneliese and our son Tom in Pullman, WA in 2003-- but rather all of us had stayed and bought a new home in Pullman, I would not be a priest today. Tom would not have started to study organ at CSU nor gone on to Notre Dame for more and onto KU for yet even more. Rick had been viewed for slow-tracking in 5th grade in Pullman. He aced practically most every middle and high school class and earned two degrees at Chapman University near L.A. Yet we **had** been praying that we might not have to live apart as a family, and couple.

Finally, many people don't get what they pray for because the object of the prayer or the manner of its being offered up was not pleasing to the Lord. If we really need a car to be able to get to employment, we shouldn't ask the Lord for a Porsche or (to buy American), a Corvette. "A car", will do.

Nor should an important prayer be offered up in a "by the way" manner. Just as with apologizing to someone or confessing ones sins to the Lord, if it is really important to you, treat it as such. And don't forget "to storm heaven with prayers". Do it more than once if something really is important to you.

But yes, sometimes people don't get answered a seemingly very proper prayer offered devoutly and continually, such as recovery for their child or saving a grandchild from a wildfire. And this is where clergy come in and have to work very long and hard. But that is a topic for another, full sermon on a day other than the day after our Lord's Transfiguration.

Suffice it for now to say that asking the Lord himself to help us to pray for that which pleases **Him**, is a very good start towards getting ones prayers answered. We probably never will start glowing as our Lord did, but we will never dishonor the Lord in prayer, as had the moneychangers inside the Jerusalem Temple on Palm Sunday. Amen. +