

You know, the Transfiguration is an important story in our heritage. It's when we really believe that Jesus began to know exactly who he was. I don't think, in my opinion, that Jesus knew fully who he was. Because, if he had, he would have had a hard time redeeming us if he went to the cross knowing who he was, fully. If he had total awareness that after the cross and death, there would be resurrection. I mean, that is not quite a sacrifice in my book. He needed to not know that there would be resurrection. He needed to know that God loved him and had chosen him for a special message mission. To bring word to people that is new and different.

If you look at the lessons throughout all of the Scriptures, the Old Testament and the New Testament, the message changed with the coming of the New Testament. That is why we are all Christians. That is why we are all staying here. The message changed. It was transformed by the power and the love of God. It is a different message. A message that speaks about the fact we are the chosen people of God, along with the Jews. It says that we are people that are set aside and called to be agents of change and love in this world around us.

I want you to think about the Old Testament lesson for a second. Here are these guys who are going up to this mountaintop with Jesus. They figure, Oh we are going on a picnic. Or we are going to go celebrate something. It not really clear what they were thinking, but they were not thinking too much. Then a cloud came over them and what happened? They got scared. They got frightened. And being frightened they were thinking even less. They figured, oh something big is going to happen now. (Because in the Scriptures, when a big cloud appears and there is thunder and lighting, something big is going to happen.) So all of a sudden they said, "Oh I know what this is. There are the two prophets with Jesus, this is the Purim." The Purim is the Jewish festival of the moons. It's a festival that they celebrate and love one another under a booth. Even to this day I practice the Purim with one of my Rabbi friends. He invites me over once a year and we have a Purim Seder. The Seder is held outside, it has to be outside. It is under a cover. It is symbolic of journeying people, moving to a place of life and abundance and spring.

It was very interesting that these guys began to build booths, figuring that was what they were supposed to do. But that was not what they were supposed to do. They were supposed to listen and see what happened. Just like Jesus was figuring it out, they were supposed to be there to be his community and support him in figuring it out. That is a real important factor. Eddy I were talking about this lesson. (Eddy is always prepared in case I do not want to preach. Wouldn't it be hard to work for a guy who all of sudden said, as you were preparing to walk down the aisle, "I think you should preach today?") In talking about these lessons, Eddy has the wisdom to know that the two men were going to go hide in the booths they were building. They were going to hide themselves in an activity so they didn't have to fully participate. I had the same idea independently.

That is really interesting because that is what this is about. We can't get caught up in just the tradition. We can't get caught up in just the physical things of old festivals. We need to be actively involved, and as said in the second lesson of today, constantly evaluate everything we say in "the Spirit". This is a spirit filled service. The music is unbelievable. It is something that I have been blessed by for many years. And I thank you. It is one of those things that opens your heart and lets you listen a little differently to the presence of the Holy in your life. These guys should have been interested in listening to the presence of the Holy and not worrying about getting a bunch of booths built.

When we hear the presence of the Holy, we know where God is calling us. When we hear the presence of the Holy we can feel the presence of God within us. You know, Jesus is not just the Son of God. We are a unique church. The Christian church and the Christian faith are unique. Jesus is God. It pretty hard to figure out how it happened that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all the same and not a hierarchy. But if God is powerful in creating somebody like me and making something wonderful of me, then God is powerful enough to have three manifestations of a one living God.

The two men were supposed to hear the message of the power of the transforming nature of Jesus and that Jesus was going to become something new and different in this instance. That Jesus' face was going to shine differently after this was all over. That was unique. Have you ever known anybody who you felt was the happiest person in the world? All of a sudden you realize that they look different all of the time. There weren't furrowed brows and angry looks. There was just that sense of peace, of God, that passes all understanding, the presence of the Holy in their lives. Have you ever seen those faces?

I had a woman by the name of Ruth in my life one time. She was 92. She told me she was getting ready to go be with Jesus. I looked at her and she was changed. She said, "I have been living all these years and I am just as happy as can be." She lived eight more years. And for those whole eight years that she was preparing to go be with Jesus, her face shone. Her face was always happy and vital. She looked at life differently for a change. She wasn't caught up in the way it had been in the past.

You noticed today that when I came in I was not walking at the end of the line? You know that is the place of honor. That is the place you are supposed to be, as a Bishop. But, as far as I am concerned, the person that is the vicarial minister, the celebrant of the Eucharist needs to be behind me, in the place of honor. Because if they are living out the role of Christ, the sacrificial role of Jesus in this world, where should they be? In the highest place of honor. That is why I do that.

There was a monk, Chrétian, 17th century. He lived a life that was of total servant-hood. He was a Cistercian. He said a very interesting thing that has hung in my heart. I was reading one day and I saw his statement and thought this is what it is supposed to be. The statement said, "All seek power except God." My first thought was, Well, God has all the power anyway. Why does God have to seek power? But that is not true. Because

God gave power to Chuck and to me, to you, Sharon. God gave it to us. We are custodians of the power in this world. We're custodians of the transforming love of God in everything we undertake. We're called to be the people of God, living out Jesus' love in this world in such a way, that we are open hearted, open handed and open minded. That we look to draw all people to the love of God and bring them to an understanding of who they are and to whom they belong. Imagine that? God has relinquished all the power to you and to me. God does not need power. He has us. What we are called to do is listen to the voice of God. Sit in still silence like those disciples on the mountainside with Jesus should have done. They should have been listening to what God was calling them to do. That's what we are about, every day of our lives. If we are going to do that, we have to make time to do it. We have to make time to hear the voice of God. We have to make time to listen to what God is saying to us. Usually we are too busy getting the dishes done, moving this thing or that thing, finishing the remodel on the house, working but we don't forget that God intervenes in all things.

The last time I was here I told you about my son and he had a thing on his liver. As I was driving out of the parking lot, (and this is no exaggeration) two of your clergy were in the car with me. I got a phone call from my son, he said, "Dad they have done a third CAT scan and they can't figure out what they saw on the first two. I'm healed." He was healed because he listened. He knew to pray and he knew to call. And I knew to ask. And he knew to ask.

We, as Christians in this world, need to be willing to open our hearts to one another in such a way that the songs we sing are changed. That we speak to one another is such a way that we cherish the human being we see. When I look at you, I see Jesus. And when I look at you, I see Jesus and when I look at you, I see Jesus. It is the face of Christ overlaid on you that transfigures me, makes me different and makes me change. You know, I am not the nicest guy in the whole world. And if you listen to a lot of people I'm not nice at all. However, if I listen to the word of God in my heart and I reach out and touch each and every person I come in contact with, in the same way that they are touched by Jesus, I am transfigured. I am made one with God. I can be the agent of the love of God.

The enveloping of a father in the hug of a son. He's being enveloped in the love of God and you are being enveloped in the love of God because the two of you are together, as one.

When we hold our children as we hold them just before they go to bed, or the little girl who is out there in her father's arms. They are experiencing the love of Christ in all that they undertake. Can you imagine what kind of world this would be if we loved each other with that sense of understanding and compassion, without the rigidity of the law to beat us over the head? If we actually believe that God is constantly speaking to us like it said in the second lesson today, that no prophecy from Scripture is fully whole until the Holy Spirit has acted upon it. That is an important thing. The children that came up here earlier, that I got to talk with, that is the best part of my week. And, children learn what

we teach them. If we teach them to love and be compassionate, they will be loving and compassionate.

I have two wonderful grandsons. One of the Acolytes at the early service was with my youngest grandson, Thomas. I don't know how Duncan handled that, because Thomas talks constantly. Young Mr. Millard come up to me and said, "I like your grandson, Thomas. He's a good archer." I thought for sure he was going to say he is a good talker.

Thomas and his older brother, Christopher, who is 13, went to camp this last week. They had a great time at Camp Stevens. I hope you send your children to Camp Stevens. It is a great place, even though it is not within our Diocese. It is a fabulous place.

I was real proud of my 13-year-old grandson. He learned an adult lesson. All of a sudden in the last year he and I have been having these man-to-man talks. He was talking with me just before he went to camp and how excited he was. Girls are not real important in his life yet. He really loves his history class and the trip we were on to Washington, DC. He really enjoyed meeting the Senators and people I introduced him to. He was talking, you know, man to man. It is amazing, he gets rigid. And then he went off to camp this week. And I was really proud of him.

Christopher is a real gentle guy, but the only person he picks on is his 10-year old brother, Thomas. Works that way doesn't it? He went to camp and somebody walked up to him and figured out that he was my grandson and said, "Your grandfather is a heretic." Told him that I did not believe in Jesus. Christopher knew that, we had that conversation before. I believe in Jesus more than 99.999% of anybody who is a Jesus believer. I won't say 100%. The guy was really rapping on him.

Do you know how I found out about this? Christopher didn't tell me. Thomas. Thomas told his mother. She went to pick him up at the end of camp. Thomas got in the car, didn't tell her he had a great time with archery, did all sorts of fun things at camp. The first thing he said was, "Boy! Do I have two pieces of news about Christopher! He met a girl and her number is in his cell phone and they are sending texts to one another." And then Thomas said, "And he didn't hit that guy." Then she quizzed him on what guy and found out about the story of his heretical grandfather.

I was proud of Christopher. I was proud of Christopher. I wasn't exactly proud of the way he talked to the guy, but I was proud of Christopher, because he didn't hit him, didn't go off half-cocked. He said, "Shut up and stop being a parrot." Christopher figured out, at thirteen years of age, that the other boy was mouthing something that somebody had told him.

In this world, watch what you say in front of your kids. Watch how you inhibit their thinking. Watch how you build their prejudices, because it is not a good thing. Allow them to be. Allow them to grow. Enter into conversation with them. Help them to understand who they are and to whom they belong. It is not our job to mold them into a rigid automaton or a clone. It is our job to help them become all that they can be. Some

of us in this room were not allowed to think when we were kids. Others of us were encouraged.

Be transfigured by the love of God. Allow your faith to come alive with your full understanding of who Jesus is in your life. I got to tell you, your face will start to glow when you understand what you are called to do in this world, and what you are called to be.

I am an old man now. I have a few more years to serve people and I can be honest about one thing, and one thing alone. I will never try to coerce anyone or force them to believe as I believe, but I will love them in the name of Jesus as if they were the Christ and this world will be transformed because we have been transformed.

Love one another as I have loved you. That is what Jesus says to us. Be one with another in compassion and understanding. When your brother or sister falls, pick them up, dust them off, don't stomp them into the ground. Love God. Love self. And love your neighbor. Be transfigured. Amen