

Transfiguration Sunday 2017 “Jesus calls us to transformation”

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When I was in college at the University of Washington, I spent most of my free time at the Catholic Newman Center. This was back before there was a church built there. We operated the Newman Center out of a large house but we made it work, just like St. Teresa of Calcutta made operating a parish out of a barn work and later a truck driving school of all places not too many years ago. At that point in my college days, I gravitated to the Newman Center, not because my parents made me go as I was living on my own by that time, but because I was searching for answers to questions like, what does God want me to do with my life? I am sure you have asked yourself that question a time or two in your lives as well! At the time, it was a rather urgent question for me because the UW is expensive! If I wanted to stay on a four year track and graduate on time, I needed to settle on my major quickly. Therefore, prayer was required. The Newman Center was also attractive because I enjoyed being with other young people who shared similar values and experiences, a luxury in a place as big as the University of Washington. Of course, the world is a big place too. It is therefore very good to belong to a parish community as a place where we can grow in our relationship with God, a place to be gently reminded that life is not all about me but something bigger, a place that challenges me to be more loving and charitable, and a place where we can journey through life with other pilgrims seeking the same destination, the Kingdom of God.

Back to my college years! The biggest event at the Newman Center each year was the annual Search Retreat. Are any of you familiar with that retreat? It is a wonderful retreat that is particularly helpful for young people in their late teens and early twenties, at a time in life when we are asking the really deep questions like: who am I, who is Jesus, and where am I going? The format of the retreat is to explore these three questions and make friendships along the way. After my first Search retreat, I didn't have all the answers, but I did feel God talking to me. God told me to stay close to the Newman Center. This resulted in becoming a guitarist for the choir the first year, a peer minister the next year, the president of the Newman Catholic Association the third year, and applying for seminary in my fourth year. Anyone who knew me, and knew how wild I was back then will tell you, it was quite the transfiguration.

And we all have transfiguration moments, don't we? Whether it is connecting with God through our study of scripture, through nature, a moving retreat, or perhaps the transfiguring words of someone wise, something Jesus told you through prayer, or perhaps it was a moving liturgy, Christmas or perhaps Easter, we all have moments in our lives when we feel transfigured. Perhaps it was the first kiss when you were falling in love. Perhaps it was the first time you looked into the eyes of your newborn child. We all have transfiguration moments in life when God is present in that moment and you are never the same again.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus leads his disciples up a high mountain to witness his transfiguration. Elijah and Moses appear and this demonstrates that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophets and the law. God speaks from heaven and this gives the disciples clarity in their vocations. Peter wants to stay in the moment. Peter wants to build monuments and to stay put, and don't we all. Soon after the events at Mount Tabor, however, Jesus begins to lead his disciples to Jerusalem and to the cross. You see, Jesus is leading his disciples to another mountain, Golgotha, where all of humanity is transfigured through the passion, death and resurrection of the Son of God. For the disciples of Jesus, the transfiguration they are hungering for will be the promise of salvation, resurrection and everlasting life.

Last weekend I suggested that summer can be an opportunity for us to take the time in the midst of our recreation to re-create as well. Summer can be an opportunity to take the time for a retreat day or two, asking the deeper questions like who am I, who is Jesus, and where am I going? A good starting point this week could be to recognize and remember the transfiguration moments in your life. Remember and cherish the moments when God was very present to you. Never forget those moments. Like Peter, we have monuments on those mountain top moments as spiritual places we can go back to so to reconnect with and worship God.

On the other hand, I also believe summer is an opportunity to reflect on why you had a transfiguration moment in your life in the first place? Where was God leading you back then? Where is God leading you now? This Sunday the Lord takes us up a mountainside so we can see the world around us from a higher perspective, with God's eyes. If we accompany Jesus up that mountain, over time we may notice a radical transfiguration at work in our own lives. You see, the Gospel is constantly calling us to conversion of heart so to welcome a transfiguration in our own lives to be more like Jesus. What does that look like for you? This is a good starting point for prayer because just as we are called to be transfigured by the love of God in every area of our lives that needs transfiguring, as members of the Body of Christ, we are called to participate in the more ambitious agenda God has in mind, namely, the transfiguration of the world, beginning with Woodinville.