

**The Transfiguration**  
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In the Book of Deuteronomy God made a promise to the people of Israel as Moses prepared to die after leading them for many years. His immediate successor was Joshua, but there would be another great leader in their future. Moses assured them: **“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet.”** The question before us is who that prophet would be. Luke, the author of today’s Gospel, had some very definite ideas about the answer to that mystery.

In the reading from Exodus we hear about Moses coming down from Mount Sinai. He had been on the top of the mountain talking with God and receiving the Law, the commandments of God which instruct God’s people in how to live faithfully. In the reading from Luke we hear about Jesus, who also went up a mountain to be in conversation with God. Moses was transformed by being in the presence of God so that the skin of his face shone. Jesus was transformed so that he shone with glory, and his clothes turned radiant white. In Exodus Moses was the only person on the mountain. In the Gospel Jesus was joined by none other than Moses himself, along with Elijah, the greatest of God’s

prophets. Luke tells us that Jesus, Moses, and Elijah were talking about Jesus' *departure*. In Greek, the language in which Luke's Gospel is written, the word for departure is *exodus*. Yes, like *The Exodus* that Moses led when the Israelites escaped from slavery in Egypt. These are not subtle indicators. Even the cloud, the cloud of God's Presence that showed up as a pillar of cloud to lead God's people in the Exodus, and that covered the top of Mount Sinai when Moses was called up to be with God, that same cloud makes another appearance in the Gospel at the top of the mountain and God speaks from it again. Moses represents the Law, and Elijah represents the Prophets, but who are we to understand Jesus to be? God answers that question, saying: **"This is my Son, my Chosen."** How are we supposed to respond to God's statement that Jesus is God's Son? God says, **"Listen to him."**

I appreciate the clarity of the parallels drawn between Moses and Jesus. We have trekked along the trail of biblical clues to reach the conclusion that Jesus is indeed the promised Prophet like Moses guaranteed back in the Book of Deuteronomy. Yet Jesus is also God's Son, and to understand that begins with knowing our Bible well enough to recognize the signs that God places in front of us. Only when we know the sacred stories of Scripture can we start to recognize their

themes as they illuminate our understanding of Jesus and appear in our lives and the world around us.

Exodus tells us that Moses was transformed so that **“the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.”** Luke says that while Jesus was praying **“the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.”** This event, called The Transfiguration, is a synonym for transformation. Lest you think that such changes are only for the main characters in Bible stories, think again. In Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians that we heard today, he clearly states an expectation that such change applies to us: **“And all of us...are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”**

Moses was transformed by God’s Presence so that he shone with the reflected the glory of God, like you and I might darken or get freckles from being out in the sun. Jesus was transfigured by God’s Presence from the inside out because he is filled with the glory of God. You and I are also in the process of being transformed. The Holy Spirit is given to us in baptism and renewed in us each time we receive the Holy Eucharist. Therefore we, like Jesus, are filled with the Presence of God and may show forth the glory of God, despite our very real humanity.

Professor and contemplative Martin Laird says matter-of-factly that **“We should try as hard as we can to treat other people with the utmost respect simply because each of us is a ray of God’s own light....”**

Our transformation is both a fact and a mystery. It is a fact in that we know it to be true and can see it taking place. Try reading the annual report, engaging in a ministry at Christ Church, or looking at the people around you. Thomas Merton had a vision and, in one of my favorite quotes, said: **“There is no way to tell people that they are walking around shining like the sun.”** Do we all look transfigured all the time? Heavens no. Neither did Jesus. But, if we pay attention, we have the privilege of seeing glimpses of transformation and rejoicing in it. That is why we embrace our mission statement ***Transforming ourselves and our community through the unconditional love of Jesus Christ.*** God is present and at work, both in us and through us, so that we can grow as people who share the light and love of Jesus wherever we might be—and that is glorious.

Amen