

The Last Sunday After Epiphany - Transfiguration - Mark 9:2-9

Recently Pastor Sue and I had a nice visit from her sister and her family. Polly their daughter had a hockey tournament in Ottawa, and they made a slight detour to see us. As I asked Polly about her hockey team, I recalled a photo album I was given. I don't think Polly understood that photos at one time were put in books under a plastic coating. Little did she know pictures aren't just found on Facebook.

The album itself has a team picture of every hockey and baseball team my brother and I played on from six years old until about the age of sixteen. The changes you can see year after year are very significant. The first picture shows my brother and I, I a head taller than him. As time progressed, I grew facial hair starting at about eleven and my brother grew as tall as me. I was a geeky teen in the last pictures. Not so geeky now eh?

In the case of children and young people, as you look back at photographs over the course of several months and years, you can see them grow and change. It happens so fast! Gradual change is occurring! Changes are going on within us and upon us and around us. Change is indeed happening.

The theme for today, today's festival of Transfiguration, should cause us to ask what's the point – and what will be the end result – of our growing and changing? To be like Jesus! St. Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 3: "All of us," he writes, "are being transformed from one degree of glory to another; this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." And the word St. Paul uses for "transformed" is the same

word used in today's gospel-reading describing Jesus' transfiguration. This "transformation" that St. Paul mentions is a process that is begun in our baptism: when the Spirit of the resurrected, living Christ is given to us, and begins work in us, for us, and for the world.

Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain, witnessed by Peter, James, and John, was a foreshadowing (a glimpse ahead of time) of what shall be for us all. We shall be changed, and not just "on the outside," in appearance, but (it seems, by scriptural references) on the inside as well.

St. Paul writes that "we shall not die, but shall be changed: in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," our mortal bodies shall put on the immortal, our perishable natures shall put on the imperishable; and we shall be changed.

Later, in his first New Testament letter, St. John writes, "Dear Friends: we are already God's children; what we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed, but we are well aware that, when Christ appears, we shall be like him, [and] we shall see him as he really is." This unity and oneness with Christ that we shall share, that we *do already* share, having been (St. Paul writes) "united with Christ in baptism," must certainly somehow include growing with him in holiness of life. "Be perfect," Jesus exhorts us in the Sermon on the Mount. As we grow with him and in him, as we are changed, as we, ourselves, are "transfigured," we grow also closer in his kindness – by the power of God's love changing us, working within us.

We do not know all the details of how and what these developments and our own personal – or collective – changes shall be; but we know that God is directing it, and

for us, it is going to be good... for “all things,” St. Paul writes, “work out for good, for those who love the Lord and are called according to his purposes.”

We are being changed. We, ourselves, now, are being transfigured – maybe not as dramatically as Jesus on the mountain top with Peter, James and John, but we are, indeed, being changed – from one degree of glory to another, by God’s leading. It is a process begun in baptism, and continues every day of our lives. Sometimes, by our own volition, we move backward with the process; but always, God is moving us forward. And today God has inspired and guided us to be here, to be with each other, which is part of the changing process, changing us toward another degree of glory; and God brings us here to encounter and receive the presence of Christ who meets us in bread and wine ... and thus we are changed, another step in our own transfiguration.

Amen.