

LENT A 2 TRANSFIGURATION; MARCH 1, 2026 Greenwich

Three brief points about this very familiar, yet very mysterious gospel.

First point:

Who is this carpenter's son? He unseals blind eyes, straightens twisted limbs, flings out demons, feeds thousands with a few loaves, changes water into wine, forgives sins, raises the dead.

Who is this man, that even the wind and the seas obey him?

Even intimate companions still have to ponder His question: "Who do you say that I am?"

A spiritual tradition within the Orthodox Church says that Jesus was always shining brilliantly with the light of God, but people couldn't see it because of their own sinfulness and self-absorption.

Jesus knows that the disciples fear his impending passion. So, he takes them away from the busyness and noise, that they might really see him.

And that encounter with the transfigured Lord plants in them the courage they will need after the Crucifixion.

They will remember this mountaintop moment when they meet the Risen Lord in the Upper Room and on the road to Emmaus and in the breaking of the bread.

Their hearts will be on fire as He opens the Scriptures for them, changes wine to blood and bread to flesh, kneels and washes feet, and commands disciples to do all the same and member him anew.

This Lent, more than giving up desserts, perhaps we can carve out some time apart with Jesus, away from the noise and busyness. There we can fast from our fears and our self-centeredness and begin to feast on the Risen Lord's self-gift.

And perhaps we will answer, not just with our lips, but with our lives, His penetrating question: “Who do you say that I am?”

Second point:

In the film, Home Alone, eight-year-old Kevin is mistakenly left behind while his parents go to Paris for Christmas. Kevin has a scary neighbor, old man Marley; Kevin's brothers have frightened Kevin with the tale that the old man had murdered his family many years before.

On Christmas Eve, in church, Kevin talks with Mr. Marley and discovers that he's not a murderer, but he does carry a terrible burden: he is estranged from his family and not even allowed to meet his granddaughter.

Kevin now sees the man in a new way. He feels compassion for him.

This Lent, ask for the light of the transfigured Lord to help you see someone else, just one other person, as he or she really is.

Maybe someone you don't like very much, or someone you've dismissed as unworthy of your care. Or maybe a whole category of people you find off putting, whether it's Republicans or Democrats, Yankee fans or Red Sox fans.

In the light of the transfigured Christ, maybe we could see them as Christ sees them, not as scary or sinful, but as brothers or sisters.

Miller Williams put it this way: “Have compassion for everyone you meet, even if they don't want it. What seems conceit, bad manners or cynicism is always a sign of things ‘No ears have heard, no eyes have seen.’ You don't know what wars are going on down there where the spirit meets the bone.”

Caryll Houselander wrote of looking upon a crowd of people and seeing “Christ in them all..... I saw too the reverence that everyone must have for a sinner; instead of condoning his sin, which is in reality his utmost sorrow, one must comfort Christ who is suffering in him. And this reverence must be paid even to those sinners whose souls seem to be dead, because it is Christ, who is the life of the soul, who is dead in them; they are His tombs, and Christ in the tomb is potentially the risen Christ....”

Third Point.

“Begin with the end in mind.” (Stephen Covey)

Where do you want to end up, so you can figure out how to get there?

This gospel hints at how it all ends up: in glory and grace, restored to intimate friendship with the Triune God.

Jesus has been warning the disciples of the coming Passion, and they are frightened and distressed. So now he is giving them a foretaste of the Resurrection---how it will all end up, first for him, and then for each of us.

But resurrection from the dead means that first He will have to die! And so will we!

For more on that, join us on Saturday March 14th, for our panel, *Put Your House In Order*.

But for now:

The transfigured Jesus is giving the disciples something to remember, to hold on to, when they are plunged into the darkness of that passion and crucifixion.

It's rather like flipping to the last pages of a murder mystery to find out how it all comes out!

They won't remember all of this on Good Friday. But perhaps a glimmer of it stirred in them on that Passover Sabbath.

And when they finally meet the Risen Lord on the first day of the new week, it all begins to come back. And joy begins to overcome fear.

And they start to see Jesus, and all of humanity, and the entire cosmos, through the eyes of the transfigured and risen Lord.

And when they see Jesus differently, and see the world differently, disciples begin to see themselves differently; begin to see themselves as God sees them.

And not only Jesus is transfigured; we disciples are transfigured too. In the light of the Lord's glory, we get to see who we really are.

Saint Paul tells the church at Corinth that “all of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed----transfigured----into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

Or, as a contemporary scripture scholar translates it: “So, we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like Him.”

Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins put it this way:

I am all at once what Christ is,
 since he was what I am
 and
 This Jack, joke, poor potsherd,
 patch, matchwood,
 immortal diamond.
 Is Immortal Diamond.

In the transfigured Jesus, we glimpse who we are and are to become: liberated from the powers of sin and death, alive, gloriously, in God's light and love, beauty and brilliance, immortal diamonds.

It's hard to remember that, and easy to forget, when sin and sorrow trap us in self-centeredness and fear.

But the Father reminds us of God's way out of that trap: "This is my Beloved Son; listen to him."

So we came here today to listen to him.

Like Peter, James and John, we have been gathered with Jesus, apart from the usual business. We quiet the noise and try to listen.

And at this banquet of Word and Eucharist, He speaks again His word of our belovedness: "Shalom, Peace is my gift to you."

And then he enfleshes that word in Eucharist, bread broken and wine poured out.

And He opens our eyes to recognize Him,
 our ears to hear Him,
 our hearts to love Him,
 and our hands to serve Him,
 until we are, all at once and finally, what Christ is:
 Immortal diamonds. And the people of God said, Amen.