

Communion Homily
by Doug King
March 2, 2003
Transfiguration Sunday
Mark 9:2-9

Well, here we are poised to begin the season of Lent once more. Our lectionary scripture reading for this Sunday before Lent is always the story of Transfiguration. I consider it to be one of the great sleight-of-hand texts of the Bible. Our attention is completely drawn to Jesus all shimmering and bright causing us to miss the most dramatic element of the account. The light show is a potent image but the aftermath is an equally potent message. The image of Jesus' bathed in light reminds us that Jesus is indeed divine. It provides a fleeting glimpse of God's glory in the person of Jesus surrounded by the faithful servants of God, Elijah and Moses.

But in the end, the disciples are left with the sight of only Jesus. No glowing garment, no special effects, only Jesus standing there in the flesh, unkempt hair, dusty feet and all. This is where the potent message of the text is to be found. In the choice God has made to literally climb into our skin, to become human, and frail, and mortal that God may love us all the more. In Jesus' Transfiguration we see the very glory of God on display, shining through flesh and bone, and we watch the return again to mere flesh and bone, the mere flesh and bone that makes all the difference in the world.

We are left to grapple with the notion of the incarnation, of one who is fully God and fully human, and why or how that makes us a difference in the reality of our lives.

My friend Michael Lindvall has written a fabulous book on this and other elements of [The Christian Life](#). This is how he explains it.

"The doctrine of the incarnation, set as it is at the center of the gospel, is a declaration that in Jesus Christ, Eternity has entered time and Transcendence has trespassed space...The inescapable implication of incarnation is that God is not so much

to be encountered in the remote and the exceptional, in the 'up there' and the miraculous. Rather, God is to be intersected in the proximate, that which is at hand and looks at first to be merely ordinary. Theologian Belden Lane put it well: 'The one great practical truth of the incarnation is that the ordinary is no longer what it appears. Common things, common actions, common relationships are all granted new definition because the holy has once and for all become ordinary in Jesus Christ.'

Michael goes on to write that "This way that is Jesus Christ does not raise us up to transcend real life. Rather it fills this earthly life with transcendence...Jesus Christ passed through life as it really is, rough edges, disappointments, and terrors included. His life cut a trail for us and laid out a path. His cross stands as the low-water mark of life, emblem of life drained empty. His Way leads us through our lives as they are—complicated mixtures of joy and disappointment, strange stews of nobility and pettiness. His Way goes as deep as life goes; it has dirt under its fingernails: through the cramped office where you face awkward moral choices, through your new house with the windows that never worked right, through the bedroom where you make love, past the TV you channel-surf when you're bored and alone...It is with you at the table where you eat spaghetti with a sulky teenager. The Way is not a way out of this world. In the end, the Way leads us into a life that may please us deeply. But more to the point, it leads us into a life that is pleasing to God. In this integrity between a life that is a joy to me and pleasing to God, the Way brings us not mere pleasure, but brings us into a joy that lies on the other side of happiness."

In the weeks of Lent that lay before us, we will journey with Jesus to the cross. In each step of the journey Jesus chooses not to be bright and shiny and removed from this world but deeply present, deeply human, and deeply willing to suffer for all he loves. And we too face a choice of what kind of faith we will live. Will we live a faith that sets up shop solely on Sunday mornings in a room with stained glass windows worshipping a God who is bright and shiny and distant? Or, will we choose to live a faith that finds its home in the ordinary? Will we trust that God can indeed be found where we live at a considerable distance from transcendent glory? Or perhaps a better way to say it is will

we trust that God's transcendent glory is infused in the midst of our daily hum drum scramble?

In the days ahead as we journey with Jesus through lent on his way to Jerusalem let us remember that God's choice to be human and hungry and hurting in our midst is a choice that has changed the world. It has transformed bread and grape juice into the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation. It has transformed a common collection of teachers and attorneys, retirees and students, business people and office workers, into the very body of Christ. It has transformed the entire world of the ordinary into the extraordinary and the holy. Jesus choice to be stripped of that shimmering glory has sent that light out across the world and back again illuminated the very presence of God in every time and every place. Thanks be to God. Amen.