

The word “Transfiguration,” means “a change in form or appearance”. Biologists might call it metamorphosis (same Greek word). The word “transfiguration” is not often part of our vocabulary today.

I can’t image a mother coming to the table with a beautifully done casserole proclaiming that she had “transfigured” the macaroni into this exotic dish. Perhaps we might use it if someone goes to the beauty shop and gets a daring haircut. “Look how transformed she is!” we might say.

Or we might use it in telling fairy tales to our children - someone was transformed into a princess, like Cinderella, or a frog was transformed into a Prince. But despite the fact that it isn’t a common word to use, what the word signifies does happen pretty often.

Something is changed into something more beautiful or altered in some way, making it more “awesome” to use today’s cliché. Lent is a transformational season in the Church. This is, of course, why we hear the story of the Transfiguration read to us today.

Jesus’ transfiguration is a bit more dramatic than a haircut, as God’s Son is seen in his heavenly glory. He is “changed in appearance” as he will be in the glorified resurrection body. The context of this is that Jesus was just about to set out to Jerusalem and ultimately the cross, as he converses with Moses and Elijah before doing so. Maybe a divine pep talk!

Moses is the Lawgiver of the commandments and Elijah the greatest Prophet. Both Moses and Elijah had experiences of God’s presence on the holy mountain. They are a sign that Jesus will fulfill the expectations of the Hebrew people.

Moses and Elijah are talking about Christ departing from a sinful world, to be experienced most acutely on Calvary, but to return to glory with the Father. And such a departure is an act of redemption, our salvation.

Just as the Exodus freed the Hebrews from slavery, the Exodus of Christ, his death and resurrection, frees us from slavery to sin. In this transfiguration, we see a preview of what is to come to those who are faithful. You get to hang out with Moses and Elijah!

The three disciples behave disappointingly. They fall a sleep, as will they do later at a crucial moment, in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to his Passion. Even Jesus couldn’t keep some awake!

Peter, confronted with divine glory, fails to call Jesus by the title “Lord”, and babbles on incoherently about building tents. The revelation climaxes with the voice from the clouds as at Jesus’ baptism: “For God’s sake Peter, Listen to him!”

This experience will enter the deep memory of the apostles and will sustain them in the difficult times ahead. They were told to listen to the words of Jesus about his own suffering and passage into glory because that will be their journey as well. They will know the suffering in their own life and this experience on the mountain will give them an assurance of glory.

We too, can experience these divine, transfigured moments that carry us later in life. It might be a letter we hold on to, or something your mother/father said to you. Or just moments where we knew God was with us. We hold on to this to carry us through difficult times.

To humor you a bit, my mother sometimes asked me if I remembered being taken in one place or another and I would sometimes answer, “I don’t remember.” And she would reply, “Why did I bother.” I’m sure Jesus felt the same frustration at times!

We can, though, be that catalyst for others. +In Port Arthur, Texas, there is a special school for very sick children, most of whom have few, if any, motor skills. One very sick boy lived at that school, dying little by little.

This little boy, though, had the good fortune to be living in the same community with some faithful believers who took the Transfiguration story as their own. God's glory lived in them. A group of these faithful joined together to go to this little boy every day and read to him, as he could not do so himself.

He was transformed from being depressed and into a responsive bright young man. And even though his spark of life would soon leave him, it got brighter and brighter not dimmer. The boy died, but his life had been forever changed. It had been transformed

In today’s passage, we are told that while Jesus was praying, he took on a brilliant display of light, because what they were seeing externally was what was in his heart. Prayer shows what is beautiful within us - the more beautiful the soul, the more beautiful the person we behold.

+A movie called Mask is based on the true story of a 16-year-old boy named Rocky Dennis. He has a rare disease that causes his skull and the bones in his face to grow larger than they

should. As a result, Rocky's face is terribly misshapen and disfigured, which causes people to be repulsed by him.

Through it all, Rocky never pities himself. One day Rocky and some of his friends visit an amusement park. They go into a "House of Mirrors" and begin to laugh at how distorted their bodies and faces look.

Suddenly Rocky sees something that startles him. One mirror distorts his misshapen face in such a way that it appears normal – even strikingly handsome. For the first time, Rocky's friends see him in a whole new way. They see from the outside what he is on the inside: a truly beautiful person.

+**A young man** once came to me and shared with me that he had lived a dark, sinful life, but he said that this all changed, because, in his words, "I heard the voice of God." And he radiated that glory.

I told him, he cannot stay up on the mountain, as Peter had wanted, as he must now depart to the valley and witness this. However, if we remain faithful, one day we can return to that mountain to be one forever, with the Lord, transfigured in his glory.