

SUNDAY 18 – B  
“The Transfiguration and The Cross”  
(Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14; Psalm 97; 2 Pt 1:16-19; Mk 9:2-10)

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Finding one of her students making faces at others on the playground, Ms. Smith stopped to gently reprove the child. Smiling sweetly, the Sunday School teacher said, "Bobby, when I was a child, I was told that if I made ugly faces, it would freeze and I would stay like that." Bobby looked up into her face and replied, "Well, Ms. Smith, you can't say you weren't warned!"

Have you ever seen a tarantula spider molt?

The way to glory is transformative faith in the Cross.

Nature can teach us something about faith. Jordan, the grandson of Ed and Angie Mihalicz of Beauval, had a pet tarantula spider. For some time it was listless and he thought it might be sick. Then one day, it surprised the whole family by literally stepping outside of its own hardened shell, having developed a new one inside the old.

Today's gospel opens us up to experiencing a similar dynamic – transformation into the likeness of Jesus through faith and long suffering love.

This passage is full of Old Testament allusions that are meant to confirm Jesus' divine authority. The presence of both Moses and Elijah on the mountain indicates that Jesus is THE new Law and THE great Prophet, as well as God's appointed Messiah.

The cloud is a symbol of the presence of God; the voice is God's proclamation of Jesus as his Son, as he did at the baptism of Jesus. By means of this event, it is revealed that not only is Jesus the Messiah (as the disciples have just confessed), he is also the Son of God. Both titles are necessary for a full understanding of his nature and role.

Mark has answered once for all, the question about Jesus' identity that had been building all throughout the first eight chapters of his Gospel. Now the disciples are to learn more fully what discipleship to the Messiah, the Son of God, really involves.

The revelation makes it clear that Jesus is greater than Moses or Elijah, yet he will enter into his glory through suffering and death. It demonstrates that the kingdom that Jesus is preaching has been implemented. Despite the turmoil of the world, experienced by the Markan Christians, they can recognize that Jesus is superior to their persecutors and is already controlling the world.

Christians frequently think of the divinity of Jesus in terms of heavenly glory or the triumph of the parousia without recognizing the real presence of God on the cross. We tend to think that Jesus is most clearly Son of God in glory, not in suffering. This passage challenges us to revise our understanding of how God's presence comes to the world.

The command to silence reminds Christians that glory and suffering cannot be separated. Appearances of glory do not provide evidence of God's truth. Sometimes people expect historians to describe Jesus as such an overpowering personality that others will be compelled to believe. Or they are scandalized by books that treat Jesus as someone who the educated elite of his time would hardly have noticed. Mark warns that faith grasps hold of a different reality. *Dramatic miracles and heavenly visions do not create faith.* Christians know that the crucified Jesus is now risen and is exalted with God. Jesus Christ is present to believers without signs and wonders.

I had a transformative faith experience during my retreat before my Episcopal ordination. At one point I was filled with fear and anxiety at what was coming for the rest of my life. Then I prayed with the passage of Jesus asleep in the boat during a storm that filled the disciples with fear. They woke Jesus up and he calmed the storm. For one hour during my prayer the emotions of fear and anxiety battled the feelings of hope and confidence, and at the end of that hour, amazingly, the fear and anxiety was all gone, and there was calm, serenity, hope and confidence that all would be well. I was transformed by faith and was now ready to face whatever crosses might come.

Our destiny is to experience the glory of God, but that glory is found not in wonders and sensationalism, but rather in dedicated faithful commitment to following the Lord through any and all obstacles that come our way, seeking only to love, accept, understand and forgive – in short, to love as Jesus loved; to live as he lived. Transformation follows faithful discipleship.

The Eucharist we share to today is itself a miracle of transformation for those who have faith. Humble gifts of bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus, and as we partake of this heavenly food, we are transformed into his Body, sent out into the world to love as he loved.

So remember, the way to glory is transformative faith in the Cross.