

The Transfiguration

Devora was a student of mine when I taught in Hoboken, NJ. She had difficulty learning: she spoke with a speech impediment; her family was poor and unstable. No one paid much attention to her. She was a “nobody” to the other students. Devora was largely ignored. Time came for the school to participate in Regional Track Tournaments. Devora not only won medals that day for her individual performance, she led the team toward a big win which resulted in a trophy. Her classmates noticed her from then on. She was named a hero; she was spoken to with respect. And Devora had a new glow about her. She was transformed because she felt loved.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus became radiant. He is recognized by God as “my Son, the chosen One.” Jesus was not recognized by the people of his hometown: “Isn’t he just Joseph’s kid?” nor by the religious authorities: “By what authority do you do these things?” And at times, not even by his friends: “Who is this who stills even the raging sea?”

God says: “This is my Son, the Chosen One, listen to Him.” Jesus is radiant. He is all aglow. He is named by God. Jesus is called out, called forth. Even given testimony to by Moses and Elijah!

This transfiguration shows to the 3 disciples a manifestation externally of what will become of Jesus after his journey to Jerusalem and to Calvary.

But transfiguration happens when one is fully transformed. Transformation is not a solitary event, it happens over and over again. Throughout his public ministry, Jesus transformed many people: those who were broken, those who were wounded, or cast aside, or who had sinned. He called to the deepest part of people and transformed them by the power of God’s love, the same power that transfigured Jesus.

That experience was getting closer to who Jesus really was. We all get closer to who we really are when we hear our name called in love. When that happens we become radiant, we are enabled to face the future.

In our Lenten journey we are asked to transform each other by the power of God’s love in us. We are called to the ministry of transformation.

What would it take to transform us? Or the people we know? Who calls our name in love? Whose name do we call in love?

As we celebrate the breakthrough of the Selma protests of 50 years ago, it's good to acknowledge that an unprecedented number of Catholics stood with our brothers and sisters from the South. Thirteen representatives from the Catholic Interracial Council of Syracuse sent a chartered plane to Selma to do the work of transformation. In all, 900 Catholics from all over the country participated in the Selma protests. The Sisters of St Joseph from Rochester, who had been serving the African American Community in schools and in a hospital, opened a wing of the hospital as a dormitory for all who went to join in the work of transformation.

We, as a church, have become transformed by opening our doors as a Gospel community. We have been touched by the gifts of one another.

We are entering into yet another phase of being called to be open because now this parish community had a new parish center to welcome the wider community. In this new center we will hopefully, continue the work of transformation.

Our bulletin this week provides another invitation to transformation. Jesus' prayer was creative, positive energy. He transformed those around him with positive, loving thoughts. Our positive, loving thoughts can transform our world as well. Rather than meeting violence with violence, we are called to respond in love. Prayer transforms not only ourselves but effects the larger world as well because we are a part of the whole so if we are transformed so will the whole. We are all called on to hold troubled brothers and sisters in God's light.

So for this Lent, let us join the Sisters of St. Francis, and congregations and churches in other cities in the practice of asking God to help us each adopt one member of ISIS to send light to each day in our prayer. It will only take a few minutes of focused time.

We start off our prayer with positive energy and gratitude. We believe God's love and light are already within us therefore then we spend some time in quiet sending that transformative light to a particular person to whom God will assign it. Perhaps we can create a critical mass for transformation by inviting friends of ours to do this practice as well.

It is time for us Catholics to once again join in the efforts to bring injustice to its knees by sending God's light and love. In this process, we shall all be changed.