

*Grace, Mercy and peace from God our Father and our lord, Jesus Christ.*

This is the time of year *when people daydream of jetting off to some tropical island* to rejuvenate themselves with sun, surf and self-indulgence. We long to escape from the drudgery of work demands, school pressure, and daily obligations to bask in the bright light of the sun where there is no evidence of complications, expectations, or looming conflict.

People pack their bags in the winter to go to some island paradise, *to get away from the cold, gray, rainy days, to forget the menacing peril of politics, the economy, the rise and fall of the stock market, the grief of death, illness, personal uncertainty, troubling concern for loved ones.* They go where the sun is warm and the view of the ocean is spectacular. They go there to forget about their problems and just relax and enjoy the pleasure that their hard earned money can buy them.

They *don't want to leave* because it's so easy and so nice and so warm. But when their week or two are ended they must pack their bags and head home, where they *find everything exactly as they left it* – same problems, same job, same family concerns, same grief, same aimlessness. Within a week or two the spell of that place fades, leaving only the faint memories found in the photos they bring home.

***Roberta went to a tropical island for the second time last year.***

She packed her bags, organized her itinerary, got on a plane and headed to a tropical island. ***She went where the sun warms your skin, the ocean views take your breath away, and tropical breezes exhilarate the skin.*** But Roberta didn't go to escape the problems of her own life. She didn't go to relax, but ***to struggle with those who continue struggling to rebuild their lives 10 years after hurricanes Fay, Gustav, Hanna, and Ike devastated their island home. In the middle of paradise they entered into human pain and loss, hopelessness and despair.***

***When Roberta returned home everything wasn't the same as when they left.*** Oh, she had the same lives and jobs and family, ***but there were some lives in Haiti that weren't the same. Friends in Haiti had new roofs over their heads, immunized children, and life changing surgeries.*** She also came back with photos, but that's not all. She also experienced the glory of the Lord in being God's child responding to the call to serve others in need. She worked beside brothers and sisters in need, and their world and hers are saturated with a hope that can only come from God working in and through your life. ***She told me of the amazing joy a return visit where everything went wrong, but where she was greeted with a joy and love hitherto unknown. She can't wait to go back again.***

This morning we ***celebrate the Transfiguration of our Lord***, and we hear once again the events of that glorious epiphany of God. But I wonder, do we really understand the true glory of Jesus'

## Transfiguration?

On that mount Peter, James and John witness Jesus turning dazzling white and speaking with Moses and Elijah. Peter thinks that this moment Jesus' glory is revealed. He wants to build three booths so he can stay in that place with them where he can exclusively experience God's goodness and presence. But Jesus tells him they must go down to Jerusalem to suffer and die.

*You see the Mount of Transfiguration isn't Jesus' glory revealed. If he'd have stayed up there God's love would have never been revealed on the cross.* Jesus goes down to reveal the true glory of humanity, the power to love and sacrifice for others.

*The Transfiguration was not the moment of glory, but an epiphany of God's presence to empower Jesus for the mission that lay ahead of him in Jerusalem and on the cross.* It is God's way of saying to Jesus and us, *"Listen to him, he speaks of suffering and tells you where true life is found.... Watch him, he will show you what love looks like."*

*We are like Peter.* We strive for pleasure, comfort and personal achievement, thinking it will make life more abundant, but these things do not reveal the glory of humanity as God created us. *The way of the cross is not obvious, but in reaching out to a suffering world in love we leave behind the drudgery of* work demands, school pressure, and daily obligations to bask in the bright light of the Son of God where all evidence of complications, expectations, or looming conflict fade into the background. But there is more. *Jesus'*

*resurrection demonstrates that the way of the cross unleashes an abundant, eternal life – both in these days and in the days to come.* In serving and suffering for others we reveal the glory of love for which God created us, making our lives and the lives of others around us more abundant. *And the hopeless spell of this selfish, hurting world over our lives is broken.*

*Why did Jesus bring Peter, James and John up the mountain that day if He doesn't want them to tell anyone what they see? I think Jesus brings His three most exuberant – yet easily discouraged – disciples to see that epiphany to encourage and strengthen them for the difficulties that lay ahead as He turns towards Jerusalem and the cross that awaits Him.* They will need every bit of reassurance they can muster.

God still gives us epiphanies. Christ's Body and Blood, broken and poured out for you and for me, words from the Jesus own mouth, God shares these with us to strengthen us for the work that lays before us, the tasks of God's healing, redeeming, rebuilding work which reveal the abundance of light, hope and life for which God creates us.

Weekly epiphanies, daily moments of abundant life.

*Amen !!!*