

Transfiguring Discipleship

Monica Hellwig, a noted Scripture scholar and homilist, proposed that looking attentively for an experience like the Transfiguration in our own lives in which the meaning of our discipleship is transfigured might give greater clarity to our calling and give new and sharper focus to everything in our world.

This Gospel of transfiguration, this revelatory moment of Christ's self-awareness, comes as a conclusion to a series of powerful Scriptures proclaimed today that are intended to strengthen our discipleship as we move deeper into our Lenten experience. These A Cycle of readings, which we are now experiencing, are really shaped very much in the spirit of preparing for discipleship. They're used every year with those who are preparing to enter the Church, so even as established disciples, these Scriptures offer us every three years a rich source of reflection on our lives as active disciples of Christ.

Christ's Transfiguration was a powerful moment of self-awareness. We all come to moments of self-awareness in life. Some are relatively uneventful as when we decide to apply for a promotion. Others are life altering as when we propose or accept a proposal to spend our life with another. Each of us has different criteria for what qualifies as a life-altering moment. Our Scriptures today are asking us to consider our call to discipleship as a life-altering moment.

It was for Abraham. You'll remember that Abraham had no relationship with Yahweh. Abram, as he was known before God called him, was a wandering Aramean. One day in his wandering, God called Abram by name: "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you." And we're told "Abram went as the LORD directed him." That's a life-altering moment! That's also faith! Abraham came to know who he was by accepting the will of a gracious God. That can be our story. From the beginning, God called each of us by name at our Baptism. From that moment we belonged to God! That was a life-altering moment! That's faith, too!

The Letter to Timothy can be our story of self-awareness as well. Like the community addressed in that Letter, we are now in the midst of our journey of discipleship. The journey is full of all sorts of issues, conflicts, struggles—personal and communal, and in the midst of all of that, we are encouraged to place our trust in the one who saved us and who is the source of our strength in all our troubles. Like the community addressed in that Letter, it is a reality check on our own vulnerability and our utter dependence on a gracious God who has promised to be with us. So the Psalm we prayed has real meaning; it is a life-altering act of faith:

*Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield.
May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.*

Finally, we look to the Gospel and the story of Jesus' own vision of self-awareness as a model for our own understanding of ourselves as his disciples. Jesus needed to understand who he was as he faced Jerusalem.

He had to understand the challenges that awaited him. He knew he could not face those challenges without summoning his all, which included placing himself in God's presence, as represented by the cloud, and by embracing the tradition, represented by Moses and Elijah. It was his moment of total self-awareness.

So picking up on where we began: perhaps this coming week we could use the idea of “transfiguration”—of coming to self-awareness—as a reflection on our coming to a clearer and more concise understanding of who we are, especially as disciples. So can you make that this week's Lenten reflection?

Can you make the Transfiguration your story? Can you see these weeks of Lent as a microcosm of your discipleship? Of your life? How will you vision/see yourself as a person? As a disciple? Where will God be in your life going forward? Who will be at your side as models and support? With whom will you share this vision of yourself? How will this alter your relationship with Christ? With others?