

Blessed be God who animates our lives and transfigures by irradiating us with glory and light and reflected for all the world to see. Amen

If nothing else, we are called by God especially in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, to a life of wonder love and praise. In fact we are called to be lost in that wonder love and praise, where God will find us and we will find God.

There is, I believe, nothing more wonder-filled than the Transfiguration. There is also nothing quite as confusing and possibly fearful.

Wonder and Anxiety are close companions. They live together in our souls and in the world at large.

I was reminded this week, of a line in the Book of Acts when the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost among all people gathered: And Awe Came upon everyone....These people who have realized the Holy Spirit, these people who are folks like us, are never the same. They have been transformed, reformed, by the Holy Spirit, bestower of gifts and grower of fruits, that we might be apostles in the world. I think of the Holy Spirit as Transfigurer!

And so I cannot help but **wonder** whether something like that, albeit with a much smaller group of witnesses, occurred on the mountain top when Jesus' face changed and his clothes became dazzling white? I cannot help but **wonder** whether when the small group assembled witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, when the Light of the World became the actual Light of the World, WONDER came upon everyone! We are now to search our stories and our lives for this Light that transfigures. We are now to understand **wonder** differently as a receptacle for divinity.

Wonder... we have the emojis with the circular open mouth, we have the childlike reactions to sunsets and catching a first fish, we have the tingly warm feeling when we meet Beauty, in a symphony, in a poem, in a story, in stained glass, and most of us have encountered the Risen Christ in experiences which could not be explainable otherwise.

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We don't choose wonder...it comes upon us...it infuses us...it rearranges our molecules.

just as Moses was unaware of his shining face upon encountering God and certainly did not perceive it a valuable acquisition, so we have encounters with the divine which fill us with wonder and awe.

Wonder is unexpected, surprising, and not something we can control, even though we try...by placing veils to shroud the radiance or by erecting booths to contain God's glory.

Often it seems to me that there is a fine line between responding to the anxiety of wonder and occluding it or capturing it and responding sacramentally to mark or remember the moment of brilliant radiance. After all that is what our sacramental life is all about, not just noting the rightness or goodness of events in an ethical sense but **being** awefilled at the magnificence of God's glory and finding human ways to reflect and honor that glory coming into the world.

Wonder is the supremely deep and complete emotion that only God in God's infinite wisdom and power could produce. Wonder is the appropriate reaction to God's glory.

Wonder makes all things possible or acknowledges that God makes all things so.

Wonder causes us to fall on our knees or to lift our selves as fully as possible with arms outstretched toward the heavens...

Wonder comes from a divine radiance coming into the world and wonder realized causes us to shine as well.

The witness and the wonder response to the manifestation of God's glory in light so bleached that it can only be the whiteness of which Revelation speaks!

That wonder, this story, this light, are, I believe meant to help us know the resurrection to which there were no witnesses.

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If we stay in wonder and don't go too quickly to denial, or anxiety, we are infiltrated by something outside ourselves which is coming into ourselves...the light of the world coming into the world. Sparks of divinity!

It is no mere coincidence then that Epiphany ends with an epiphany, an aha moment, the Transfiguration. The light which called the shepherds from their fields, The light which guided the wise ones and rested over Bethlehem, is the light which is now so magnificent and transformative as to guide us down the mountain, to Jerusalem, to another darker hill, to a lower darker tomb, to our deepest despair at His death, only to find some spark of memory which rekindles the wonder.

Perhaps, just perhaps, it may be so...The Transfiguration, that moment when heaven and earth touch and the liminal space of life sanctified and divine is realized, makes the Resurrection realizable, comprehensible and knowable even before but certainly with the appearances of the risen Christ. With a touch of His wound, with hearts burning in Emmaus

And wonder came upon them

As alluded to, wonder is difficult to put into words. This is especially true when the Wonder is produced by the Word made flesh. The Logos!

Unlike many of the parables and healing stories or miracles, the narrative comes alive in the picture, the image, the story and the metaphor, if you will.

Many of us come to realize that our entire lives are a process of being transfigured into the very image of God in which we were made.

In my own imagination process I often rotate the phrases wording a radiance with radiancing the Word. We humans try to explain the radiance and glory of God. We write sermons and poetry and literature, we paint and photograph, we compose music and attune ourselves to rhythms

yet behind each of these very beautiful and wonderfilled responses is an invisible grace, an invisible radiance.

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In poetry for example I am reminded of the Irish poet Michael O'Sidhail who describes this glory glow as "Some love is mine, and always mine, a peace. a radiance I've always wanted to word but can't..."

Or Gerard Manley Hopkins: The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

And wonder came upon them...

In art I think of chiarascuro the process culminating in Rembrandt's ability to depict Christ as though light were coming from behind and within him.

The result is a liminal, numinous and luminous image which seems to offer the divine itself, to make it appear to come toward the viewer...

And wonder came upon them...

But the story which for me always offers the probability of radiance realized by anyone in ordinary circumstances is the story of Thomas Merton coming up from the subway in Louisville: there was nothing particularly remarkable about the day but upon coming into the world above ground into a busy city, he was overwhelmed by a love for each and every human being. "I was suddenly overwhelmed bwith the realization that I loved all those people that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers" " It was as though they were aflame!

And wonder came upon them...

Wonder transfigures.

As the Mystic Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel says in his classic I asked for Wonder (God that is): our goal should be to live life in radical amazement! To take nothing for granted! To treat everything as incredible; everything as phenomenal. He then concludes that awareness of the Divine begins with Wonder!

It has also been said that the most pressing question is not whether God is real! It is rather are we? are we becoming our most authentic most real essential selves?

The light of the transfiguration then is both real and metaphoric. Light after all is the perfect union of all color. Eternal Salvation then is the perfect

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union of all creation. In this lifetime light and humanity is differentiated and displayed in uniqueness and too often separation. But the wonder of the Transfiguration assures us of the merger of all things coming into the embrace of the Christ!

In the end the question is not did it, a manifestation of God's glory, really happen. It is rather what happens to us. What happens to the Body of Christ. What happens to the witnesses.

I believe it causes us to become our truest selves, I believe this is divinity inhabiting us and causing us to glow. As Paul notes in 2d Corinthians: all of us with unveiled faces seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another;

Jesus is the radiant glow shining on and through us. To allow this radiance to enlighten our ministries is what we are called to do and to be.

Having touched the divine brilliance, the witnesses come down off the mountain top and continue to minister and to learn from Jesus' healing and compassion. Remember, we have not come to Jerusalem yet. We have more to learn and miles to go. But from Transfiguration to ministry below we do continue to etch the pattern of God's grace on our lives. We may be readier to come to the cross and to let go of our fear and despair by the power of the Resurrection!

In the Christian Faith our sacramental understanding is based on the Truth the Way and the Light. The Truth is God. Because of it we ask ourselves what is true about us?

The Way is God. Belief in that reality draws us to the path which must, must, go to and through the Cross.

And the Light, well the light with a capital L is that radiance of Beauty which is always, always coming into the world. That radiance transforms and transfigures. Shine in our hearts Lord Jesus!

May wonder come upon you all!