

Breaking Open the Word of Faith

Good News Reflections for the Sundays of August, 2017

by Terry A . Modica



Transfiguration of the Lord

August 6, 2017

Read:

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 9

2 Peter 1:16-19

Matthew 17:1-9

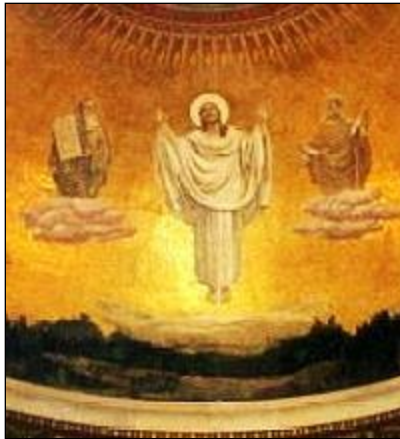
Reflect:

Atop Mount Tabor in Israel is where the pure light of Christ -- the uncreated light of his true identity -- was first revealed to the world. Not at his birth, not at his baptism, nor as he preached and healed. Although the Light of the World came to us in those momentous events, it was not revealed so clearly, so powerfully, so dramatically as when he let Peter, John, and James witness it on the mountaintop, as seen in today's Gospel passage.

The highest experience of faith was, and still is what happens when the Father says, "This is my beloved Son; *listen to him.*" The transfiguration of Christ occurs again and again every time we listen to him and our faith is enlightened. It happens every time we have a breakthrough from blindness to understanding, from sinfulness to holiness, from doubt to trust. However, now *we* are transfigured *with* Jesus!

Whenever we let his uncreated light consume the darkness within us, the people around us see Christ's true identity in us. We shine with him. Therefore, it's vitally important that we give Jesus the areas of darkness that still linger within us and let him expose the truth in his light. By repenting (which means we change), we're transformed into our true identity. What is our true identity? It's our innermost being that was created in the image of God. It's our sainthood!

Listen. Can you hear God's voice saying about you what he said about Jesus on Mount Tabor? "This is my beloved child; listen to him/her." He is saying this to others as you do the work to which he's called you. Some folks will hear him, some won't, but our yes to his calling is not based on how many people will heed his voice. We serve God because we have been



transfigured. Our holiness impels us to go where we can do the greatest good.

Questions for Personal Reflection:

† What sins do you still try to hide or deny? Why are you afraid to let Jesus shine his light into these areas of darkness? Are you afraid he'll stop loving you?

† What do you do that reveals your sainthood?

Questions for Faith Sharing:

† Describe a time when you listened to Jesus and the truth you learned from him transformed you.

† How did it help you become a true child of God more fully?

† How did it reveal your true identity more accurately?

Comments/Prayer Requests:

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 13, 2017

Read:

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a

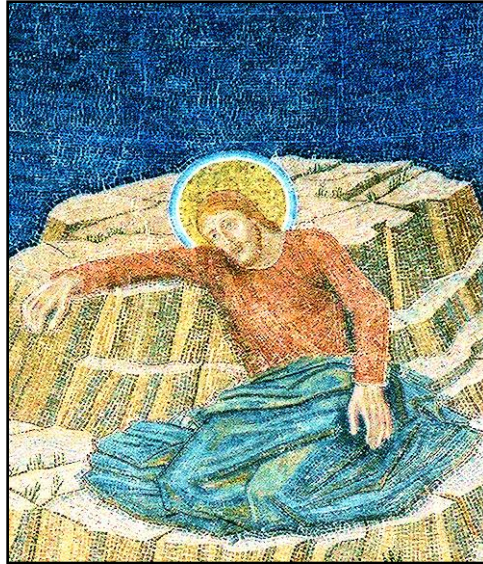
Ps 85:8-14

Roman 9:1-5

Matthew 14:22-33

Reflect:

In the Gospel reading for this Sunday, Jesus finishes with the miracle of multiplying a few loaves and fish to feed thousands of people, and then he goes off by himself to pray.



is a gift designed for our benefit *and* for responding to the needs of others. It strengthens our faith, teaches us how to walk on water, and sends us to the next shore where people who need God's help are waiting. God wants to minister to them through us. Are you prayed up and ready?

Questions for Personal Reflection:

† How much time do you spend in quiet aloneness with the Lord?

When you host a large dinner party or complete a big project or overcome difficult obstacles, do you give yourself time to recuperate and let God minister to you?

† Is it enough to restore the inner peace that comes from staying in touch with God? Or do you feel drained and unprepared to continue?

After spending time alone with his Father, Jesus was so uplifted by the experience that he ~~walked on water!~~

Questions for Faith Sharing:

† What's your favorite way of praying? What kind of prayer makes you feel most connected to God? Why?

Jesus frequently spent time in prayer. He probably went off by himself to pray a lot more often than what is written in scripture. So why did Matthew mention it here? What was significant about this particular prayer time?

† How does this help you in the tasks of your daily life?

Through Matthew, God is showing us how to achieve a well-balanced faith.

We need periods of prayer-filled solitude to restore our energies and renew our vision of what God is inspiring us to do. We all have work to do for God in our families, in our workplaces, in social gatherings, in our parishes and in every problem that arises. Giving of ourselves to others will always drain us; to thrive and grow in our usefulness to God, we must allow him to replenish us often.

Prayer helps us to prepare for whatever lies ahead, even when we don't know what we're walking into. What we gain from the Lord in our time alone with him

Comments/Prayer Requests:

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 20, 2017

Read:

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7
Ps 67:2-3, 5-6, 8 (with 4)
Romans 11:13-15, 29-32
Matthew 15:21-28



Reflect:

The Gospel reading for this Sunday challenges us to examine our tendency to judge others. The Canaanite woman had two prejudicial strikes against her: gender and nationality.

Of course, Jesus was there as Savior for the whole world, but the disciples didn't know it yet. To stretch their minds (and ours), Jesus waited for the Canaanite woman's faith to become so obvious that it would overshadow every limitation that had been imposed upon her.

For Jesus, the only outsider is someone who refuses to come into the kingdom of God. But we don't readily think like this. Our Church is full of people who have been misjudged. Many feel outcast. We easily jump to wrong conclusions about each other.

For example, how readily do you greet the people near you in the pew if you don't know them? How comfortable are you about engaging in friendly conversation after Mass someone who seems homosexual? Does your parish make it easy for single parents to come to extra activities at church by providing free babysitters?

If you're divorced, do you assume that others are deliberately excluding you? That too is usually a misjudgment.

Why do homosexuals feel outcast even though Church teachings have been issued that *compassionately* invite them to a holy lifestyle?

Why are there lay people who feel blocked from being collaborators in ministry with their priests?

Judging our fellow Christians causes them to suffer. It also allows unmet needs to continue in the Church, because the giftedness of the judged is being rejected. But if we remain conscious of our own tendencies to react to others with assumptions and judgments, we have the power to choose to be Christ for them and to receive Christ from them.

Questions for Personal Reflection:

- † Have you ever felt like an outsider? Even in the presence of Christ? How have you been pushed aside and neglected? What kind of damage did it do?
- † Are you willing to try to again to get more involved?

Questions for Faith Sharing:

- † Whom are we most likely to judge?
- † What is your parish doing – or what have you personally done – to heal some of the damage that was caused when others were misjudged? What else needs to be done?

Comments/Prayer Requests:

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 27, 2017

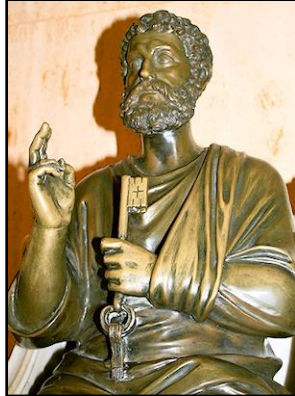
Read:

Isaiah 22:19-23

Ps 138:1-3, 6, 8

Romans 11:33-36

Matthew 16:13-20



Reflect:

When Jesus ordained Peter to become the rock upon which he would build his Church, he made a promise. The gates of hell, he said, speaking of the netherworld that belongs to the principalities and powers of darkness (see Ephesians 6), "shall never prevail against it."

Jesus did not say that hell would never win battles against the Church. He said that the *gates* of hell would not win. Of course they won't; gates don't attack! Gates protect. Gates hold inside their boundaries whatever has been enclosed by a fence or wall. Do you know anyone who's been imprisoned by their sins? Or by hellish circumstances?

Christians are not called to take a defensive posture against attacks and encroachments from evil-doers. Christians are called to take the offensive – we are called to attack the very gates of hell, knock them down, and conquer the devils that are trying to drag people into their kingdom of misery and eternal death.

What Jesus did 2000 years ago to free people from evil he still does today through you and me.

For the sinners who want to escape from evil before it's too late, Jesus gave gate keys to Peter when he ordained him as the first shepherd (priest and pope) of Christianity. These keys have been passed from generation to generation through the unbroken line of Catholic priests.

What are the keys? The gates of hell are unlocked by Sacraments; they open the way to eternal life. When a priest "looses" (releases) the grace and forgiveness

of God upon a repentant sinner during the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or when a priest "binds" a man and woman together in the Sacrament of Marriage, it's Jesus who's doing it through him.

The supernatural power of the Sacraments conquers evil every time we take them seriously and rely on the graces they provide.

Questions for Personal Reflection:

† Where is there a locked gate in your life, which needs to get blown open so that Jesus can rescue you from some sort of darkness?

† What will you do this week to utilize the Sacraments more deeply, more profoundly?

Questions for Faith Sharing:

† Who do you say Jesus really is, and how do you encounter this Jesus in the Sacraments?

† Which Sacrament (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Marriage, Ordination, or the Anointing of the Sick) is most powerful for you personally? Why?

Comments/Prayer Requests: