

Homily  
August 6, 2023  
Transfiguration of the Lord  
24:29 – 34:06

In the 1980's, a new toy came out and it's been with us ever since: Transformers!

How many here have ever played with Transformers? Adults and children alike. They are the most amazing things to manipulate in your hands. They start out as a car or a truck or something else. And suddenly turn into a superhero.

Now, those of us who are older and somewhat challenged by such technology...well, we would do better with a Rubik's Cube, actually. Trying to unfold them and trying to figure out...well...how does this work? And those who are engineers just go, "It's easy!"

These toys, now characters, have taken over so much that also we have now the seventh or eighth – I can't remember which – movie that just came out this year. Eight movies about Transformers?! Mercy! (raising his hands) Okay.

Changing shape. Changing function. They're marvelous toys and superheroes.

We celebrate today the Transfiguration of the Lord. It comes around on a Sunday only when the Sunday is August 6. So it's been a while since we've celebrated this, at least on Sunday.

We've seen Christ "transfigured." This dazzling display confirms that Jesus is the Son of God. In fact, we heard, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him." And that hearkens back to Chapter 3 of Matthew's Gospel, when at the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, we heard the voice as well, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This Transfiguration points to the fulfillment of the prediction that Christ will come in his Father's glory at the End of the Age.

There are many images that make up this particular passage. These images would have been quite familiar to Peter, James and John from the Scripture of their ancestors.

**Mountain.** We know that "mountain" in the Old Testament clearly recalls the revelation to Moses of the Covenant on Mount Sinai. And to Elijah on the same mountain, when the Lord reveals himself in a small Whispering Sound.

The image of the **Brilliant Light**, the white garments – we heard of them in our First Reading from Daniel. And that is reflected again later in the Book of Revelation.

And that Over-shadowing Cloud, that reminds of Exodus. And Daniel. The cloud that comes down on the Mountain of Sinai, the pillar of cloud during the day, that led the people in the desert.

All of the Old Testament apocalyptic literature often expressed the presence of the Heavenly and the Divine through these images. The disciples knew them.

And then there is the Voice. A voice which is a reminder of Genesis - Abraham's call by God.

Of Exodus – Moses' call and encounters with God.

And prophets - such as Isaiah and Jeremiah.

And in our passage today, the Voice is a reference to Deuteronomy Chapter 18, in which the Israelites are commanded to listen to the prophet who is like Moses (that is Joshua) who will follow him, whom God will raise up for them.

And then the command to listen to Jesus points to the preceding prediction of his Passion, his Resurrection and his coming at the End of the Age. All of these images and the experiences of them are carried down the mountain by Peter, James and John, to be held close until the predicted Resurrection.

We know that in the subsequent chapters of Matthew's account, the disciples still struggle to understand what's going on in this Christ who leads them in Jesus, let alone accept what they have heard and seen on the mountain. It is only through the Resurrection and appearances and the Lord's assurances just before he ascends, that the words, "Listen to him," become fully understood. Only then, are the disciples fully transformed and made ready for the Spirit's coming at Pentecost.

Transformed. Am I going back to the Transformers here? No.

But let's look at what the word "transform" means. Merriam Webster gives it three definitions. The first is "to change in composition or structure." The second is "to change the outward form." And the third: "to change in character or condition - that is, to convert." It is this latter definition that really applies to us. To change in character or condition, to convert.

We heard earlier of Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan. For his ministry it was a pivotal moment. It led him to the desert and temptation, which then led him to his ministry. And the doing of the Father's will, even to death on the cross.

Our baptism is the beginning of our transformation. It is in this moment that we are first touched by the Transfigured One in all his glory and made new. We are transformed into a new person, a child of God, a member of the Body of Christ. We Are washed clean of the inherited effects of original sin. We are converted. And then, our sacramental life continues and sustains this transformation.

At each stage, the three Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist; the two Sacraments of healing – Reconciliation and Anointing of the sick; and the two Sacraments of life in the Church – Marriage and Orders. All place us in the hands of God, like Transformers. But the difference from the Transformers that we play with is that we are called to cooperate with all that we are in our transformation.

For you see, we are not just objects for God's manipulation. We're not His toys. We are his beloved, whom he shapes in keeping with another gift he gave us: our free will, our ascent. The grace is laid in us, my brothers and sisters. And we are called to embrace its work in us. For we are constantly being urged to change in character and in our human condition.

One day we shall see the light. One day we shall be overshadowed by the immeasurable love of God. And one day, we shall hear the Voice, "Well done good and faithful servant. Come share your Master's joy." May our transformation lead us to that day.