



Reflection for August 5, 2020

The Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord

You will do well to pay attention this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts.

[2 Peter 1:19]

Master, it is good for us to be here. [Luke 9:33]

For me, the most important lesson the feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord has been articulated by Mary Catherine Bateson [Interview with Krista Tippetts, www.onbeing.org]:

*I think — I'm not happy with the division between people who say, "I'm spiritual, but not religious." To me, **the starting place is the sense of wonder.** And that can take you into science. It can take you into art. . . . That is to say, when you go from wonder to a religious context, shared worship, something like that, it takes the form of praise.*

The starting place is the sense of wonder.

We ourselves imply this in our baptismal prayer, when we ask that the newly baptized be given *an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works.* As Christians, we don't claim to be better than other people, or more "right" than any anyone else. As Christians, we claim the baptismal gift of joy and wonder at all God's works. With that gift, we promise that we are willing to be *transfigured*—not merely *transformed*—made into a new figure, willing to let our wounds be a prism through which the light of Christ will shine. And we keep this promise when, following the Second Letter of Peter, we are *attentive to God as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts.* [2 Peter 1:19]

For Luke, as for Matthew and Mark, this episode is about Jesus' identity as the Messiah. It gives a framework for understanding that Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection continue and are consistent with the stories of God's faithfulness that are at the heart of Jewish tradition. In this framework, the resurrection makes sense—not as a doctrine but as an occasion for wonder and awe.

The lesson for Peter and John is to pay attention to the signs of God's presence with wonder: to trust that God's apparent silence does not mean God is absent and to recognize that if we cannot hear what we expect from God it might be because we are being shown something new. As Catherine Bateman reminds us— The starting point is wonder:

It may lead us to ask the question of science – Why??

Or to the question of faith – why not??

We are ordinary people leading full, ordinary lives. Our minds are often busier than our bodies. But in our baptism we have been blessed with *the gift of joy and wonder at God's works*. Indeed, the call for the church to do this—to glow with the light of transfiguration—is more clear than perhaps ever before. Where else can we form relationships without concern for differences in class or ideology? Where else can we share our hunger *and* our hope? Where else are we held accountable for paying attention to the lamp shining in the dark? Where else can we learn to be transfigured into wondrous and unmistakable signs of God's faithfulness.

“Allow” by Danna Faulds

There is no controlling life.
Try corralling a lightning bolt,
containing a tornado. Dam a
stream and it will create a new
channel. Resist, and the tide
will sweep you off your feet.
Allow, and grace will carry
you to higher ground. The only
safety lies in letting it all in —
the wild and the weak; fear,
fantasies, failures and success.
When loss rips off the doors of
the heart, or sadness veils your
vision with despair, practice
becomes simply bearing the truth.
In the choice to let go of your
known way of being, the whole
world is revealed to your new eyes.