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Our Savior Lutheran Church  
Transfiguration of Our Lord  
February 14, 2021

Let us pray...May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, the festival of the Transfiguration is THE transitional Sunday in the church year.

Transfiguration is the Sunday when we go from the Epiphany Season, when we focus on who Jesus is...the Son of God, the Promised Messiah, the Lamb of God...

Transfiguration is the Sunday when we go from the Epiphany Season to the Season of Lent, the time when we focus on whom Jesus will become, the risen Lord, which is observed in his suffering, death, and resurrection.

The festival of the Transfiguration is the Sunday when we go from who Jesus is to whom he will become.

Lent begins this Wednesday, which is Ash Wednesday.

Wednesday begins our 40-day journey with Christ to the cross and resurrection.

During the Season of Lent we observe Jesus' mission where he dies on the cross that we may be saved from our sin, and where he is raised to new life that we might have the promise of eternal life.

Yes, the festival of the Transfiguration is THE transitional Sunday in the church year.

And we see the transition itself there in our gospel reading, there on the mountain with Jesus and his disciples.

Jesus goes up on the mountain with Peter, James, and John and these disciples witness an astounding scene.

They hear that Jesus is the Son of God.

They hear who Jesus is.

And then they see Jesus transfigured such that his clothes become a dazzling white.

So then they witness whom Jesus will become.

They witness a glimpse of the glory of Jesus.

They witness a glimpse of whom Jesus becomes when he is raised in glory.

They witness a glimpse of the resurrected Lord.

It is this transition the disciples Peter, James and John witness on the mountain.

So, again, the Transfiguration is about going from learning who Jesus is in the Epiphany season to learning about whom Jesus becomes in Lent and Easter.

From this time on, from today on, Jesus will set his gaze on Jerusalem where he will suffer crucifixion.

From today on, Jesus will focus on the way to the cross.

From today on, Jesus is journeying to the redemption of all creation.

The festival of the Transfiguration is THE transitional Sunday in the church year.

PAUSE

Now, sisters and brothers in Christ, we know there are all sorts of transitions WE experience.

There are the transitions of everyday life.

Sleep to wakefulness.

Home to the outside world, to school or to work.

Back to our home.

And then wakefulness to sleep.

There are all sorts of daily transitions we experience, and these probably don't bear so much on our lives, whom we are becoming...

They don't bear on our lives as much as say other more profound transitions.

Going from adolescent to young adult.

Going from home to college.

Going from school to the workforce.

Going from being single to getting married.

Going from not having children to parenthood.

Going from the workforce to retirement.

Going from well-being to ill-health.

Going from marriage to widowhood.

Going from one's home to an assisted living facility.

Going from life to death.

Sometimes we speak of transitions as rites of passages.

Sometimes we speak of transitions as changes in life.

Sometimes we speak of transitions as opportunities for growth.

I find it interesting that for many of life's passage the church has developed rituals.

A child is born into this life, and the church celebrates with a baptism.

A couple wants to spend their life together, and the church celebrates with a wedding.

And when people die, we remember them with a church funeral.

Some even joke that the church has three principle roles in life: "hatch 'em, match 'em, and despatch 'em."

It is a less than tactful way to say it, but it does make the point.

The church is, or at least once was, in the business of accompanying people through important life passages.

Birth, marriage, and death. Hatch 'em, match 'em, and despatch 'em.

Indeed, the church should probably have more rituals to accompany people through other transitions in life, like going off to school, like entering the workforce, like retirement.

PAUSE

So, why has the church developed rituals for life's passages?

Why, but because transitions are not always easy.

I don't know about you, but I find transitions are not always so simple to navigate.

In fact, many times, transitions are downright tough.

But transitions are the stuff of life.

Transitions are those things which shape us into whom we are becoming.

Transitions form us, whether we like it or not.

Who we are now is the not the same as who we once were.

And who we are now is not the same as who we may become tomorrow.

PAUSE

But aside from the transitions we have already mentioned there are other transitions in life as well.

There are other transitions in life to which we probably don't give as much thought as we should.

There are other transitions that get buried in the routine of daily living.

There is the transition for instance from hope to joy.

There is the transition from blessing to gratification.

There is also the transition from fear to comfort.

There is the transition of ignorance to enlightenment.

There is the transition from anger to forgiveness.

There is, too, the transition from grief to reassurance.

There is the transition from uncertainty to faith.

These are also transitions in life.

And it is these transitions that are hidden underneath those other transitions of life that happen on the surface.

And, when we talk about these other transitions as those things which shape us into whom we are becoming, what we are really talking about is grace.

We are shaped, we are becoming, we are experiencing transition through the power of God's grace.

Transitions, yes, can be extremely challenging and trying.

But, it is how we navigate the transitions that make us into the people we become, and that is grace.

And, I guess when we stop to think about it, that is ultimately what the church provides.

The church provides not only a community to surround us when we go through challenging transitions.

Which is why this pandemic has been so difficult for us as persons of faith.

We don't have the luxury right now to gather in person when we are experiencing a hard transition.

Although, we can still surround our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ with our phone calls, with our cards, with our prayers and well-wishes.

We can still do that, and indeed we need to do that more than ever right now.

So, the church does provide a community for us when we experience challenging transitions.

But, the church is also there to help us make sense of the transitions we experience.

No other institution exists in society to do just that.

The church helps us navigate and make sense of life's transitions.

And I am not just talking about the "rituals" of say a baptism, or wedding, or funeral.

No, but it is the words of our church rituals which give us meaning, and that is the grace.

It is the words of weekly worship, that is the grace.

It is the words of the Order of Confession and Forgiveness.

It is the words of the hymns we sing that is the grace.

It is the words in the reading of scripture.

And it is the words of our prayers.

It is the words in our church life that give meaning to the various transitions we experience.

It is in the words where we learn what it means to move from hope to joy...

Blessing to gratification.

Fear to comfort.

Ignorance to enlightenment.

Anger to forgiveness.

Grief to reassurance.

And uncertainty to faith.

It is the words that give meaning to all that we experience.

And those words are the grace of God, which help us, you and me understand who we are becoming.

You and I are not yet who we truly are.

You and I are not yet the final version of ourselves, but we are in the process of becoming.

PAUSE

I want to conclude then with a recent learning I had.

I recently overheard my son's teacher when my son was on his Zoom meeting the other week for biology class.

That is one of the perks of this pandemic world, I sometimes overhear my son's school lessons, and I learn things.

His teacher was explaining to the class that every seven to ten years our bodies completely shed their cells.

So that we are constantly in the process of becoming a new physical person.

My son's teacher said to my son's class, "Isn't that mind-blowing? The body actually remakes itself, such that you are becoming an entirely new person at this very moment, and that process will continue over and over again throughout your life."

So in essence what happens physically with respect to our person, that is being remade, always in the process of becoming...

That process is also what we have been sort of describing on a spiritual level.

PAUSE

So today, yes, is THE transitional Sunday in the life of the church.

Come Wednesday we begin the journey of Lent.

But let us not forget that today, and tomorrow and the next day we are transitioning, we are becoming by God's grace the person God would have us be.

By continuing in the words of the church...

By continuing in the community of God, the body of Christ...

We are always becoming. Thanks be to God. Amen.