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Daily Reflections

Journeying through Lent



Center for Spiritual Development

THE TRANSFIGURED LIFE

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Excerpts from Today's Readings

The Lord God took Abram outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be." Abram put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness. He then said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as a possession."

GENESIS 15:5-7

Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20-4:1

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.

LUKE 9:28-32

Reflection

From the earliest generations of the nomadic Hebrew tribes, through the ever more nuanced communities of Jewish history and the birth of Christian traditions and cultural families—there has always been a current of transformed life, a *transfiguration* of the personal, familial, and communal perceptions of what constituted the substance of faith. The divine introduction become intimacy, and the discovery become devotion to the God of the Jews, colors the narratives of what the faithful embraced as the deep truth of their connection to God.

The earliest images of the divine in Genesis are paternal and focused on the omnipotent creator of all. With the creation of humanity, the dialog between God and the gathering of persons becomes more focused on covenant and community, on relationship joined to the mandates of love. Transformation of life refines the dictates of Law, and this grounds a transfiguration of self and society, of religious union over obedience. Abram's connection to God in chapter 15 of Genesis carries the cosmic fruitfulness of descendants and a 'new land' born of heartfelt fidelity.

In the generations of the Pauline communities, we discover another way in which the religious understanding of populations gathers together under the umbrella of the Roman Empire. The Philippians are not a diaspora Jewish family. Rather, this people of faith commingles Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, and a small population of Jews. As a result, their experiences of God, Jesus, and 'church' would carry highly varied notions of what those realities mean. Paul's epistle urges them to await with joyful expectation the coming of Jesus their savior as the one who will bring them to the fullness of 'citizenship in heaven.' The fullness of salvation will be birthed in them as they are gradually conformed to the reality of Christ among them and within them. This is yet another *transfiguration* of perceptions, beliefs, and identities. Individual ways of being a people of faith are recreated in the salvific image of God's son alive in the ever-growing communion of the faithful.

In Luke's Gospel, Peter, John, and James are caught up into the fullness of Jesus as their savior and their Christ. Their experience is no longer an aggregate of individuals being transformed in a metaphysical change of being. They are suddenly conscious of their continuity of life with Moses and Elijah, being united into the higher vision of God's divine gifts which this *transfiguration* manifests. This miraculous moment manifests the uniqueness of the 'citizenship of heaven' which is the heritage of the disciples and all who allow the power of the resurrection to draw them into a truly mystical reality.

In our contemporary religious communities and churches, we are not likely to enter *en masse* into that higher citizenship of the Kingdom. Nonetheless, we receive the same invitation and the possibility of that vision, manifested in the transfigured reality of Jesus in our midst. Through the extent to which we allow our lives to be transformed by the fuller richness of the living Jesus, bringing new life into our midst, we not only receive a transfigured destiny in God—we incarnate that destiny for those who share our deepest hope in how we are daily being made new.



Transfiguration by Carl Bloch
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For Pondering

- How have you experienced the invitation of God in your life to surrender to a fuller giftedness in your path of faith?
- Have you found it difficult to accept that a true transfiguration in your life is possible?

- How might you learn to seek and incarnate the transforming wisdom of your faith community as you grow in God?

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