

## **The Transfiguration**

Summer is coming to an end, summer in the sense of children and teachers being out of school, of families having vacations and family visits scheduled.

It will be hot a while yet, though don't we give thanks that it hasn't been all that hot?

Summer provides a fine break from the routine,

the relief of going away from our familiar setting and responsibilities

and being in some special places, where we can be ourselves in some different way.

There is nothing to be painted on vacation,

no flower beds to weed,

and you generally get all your bills paid before you leave.

Even at home, summer lets us be a better version of our selves,

without so many commitments,

so much hurrying,

so many late nights and early mornings.

Summer is special; most of us are sad to see it go.

But go it must, because there is the work of the fall to do.

Students must learn and teachers must teach;

lawyers must lawyer and engineers engineer.

Football, apparently, must be played.

And the people of God must be called back together, in the churches, for worship,

learning, and service. We feel that need to get back to the ordinary for other reasons as well,

an instinct, perhaps to keep the extraordinary...extraordinary.

You know this, that if everything is special, nothing is.

And that human beings who cannot accept the goodness of ordinary days, of work, dinner, dishes, and bed have trouble being happy.

If the ordinary isn't sufficient, we make ourselves crazy trying to make everything special,

with substances, bad relationship choices, manufactured drama, or endless spending.

The Fourth of January isn't as much fun as the Fourth of July, we must admit,

but the Fourth of January has its own meaning

and we'll miss its meaning and the meaning of the Fourth of July if we demand each be like the other.

This way that we worship is old and widespread.

We can look back through Christian history and find Christians worshiping like this from very early on. They drew on the patterns of the synagogue, reading Scripture and offering teaching on it.

They prayed for one another and for the world,  
and then they kept the Lord Jesus' commandment to offer the bread and wine of the  
Last Supper as their feast.

The great majority of the world's Christians are Roman Catholics and Orthodox  
Christians,

who worship in this way too.

It is the ordinary way of worshiping.

When we are able to do it well, it works.

It bears the weight of the Gospel, of Jesus' death and resurrection, and our new life in  
him.

And it bears the weight of our humanity,

inviting our physical engagement as we stand, kneel, listen, and eat,

as we confess our brokenness and receive assurance of our acceptance by God.

It bears intellectual weight as well.

This worship uses words like "disquietude" and others that reward the worshiper  
willing to think on them.

There is no light show; no screen, and my sermons are spoken words, not embellished  
with video clips.

And, sometimes, it might be boring.

As part of our discernment gatherings last spring, I interviewed some parish children  
about our worship and other things we do.

They told me, pretty uniformly, that church is boring. T

hey want more snacks and entertainment.

This is hard thing for preachers to understand, for we are always a little nervous in  
worship, wondering just what might go wrong.

But I notice these children reading, such readers,

and I know how smart they are, what good colleges they go to.

I hope they will want to think as hard about their faith as they do about literature,  
physics, and medicine.

I hope they will sense in this way of worship, as they mature, a tradition deeply worthy  
of their attention.

It may only occasionally amaze, but Sunday by Sunday,

God works through it, feeding, changing, sanctifying,

as we give God the glory God deserves and God showers love and grace upon us.

Sitting with any boredom we might feel for a moment,

taking a deep breath,

listening deeply,

pondering a word or an action at the altar,

we might realize how the worship going on around us is the very inflection point of heaven and earth. What the untrained mind may think of as boredom may be, upon reflection,  
the peace that passes all understanding.  
We are only able to know the glory when we have accepted the ordinary.

So most of the time that Peter, James, and John were with Jesus, he was a lot like them. Olive skin, brown hair, sweaty in the summer. He was hungry two or three times a day, sleepy at night and after the midday meal, and occasionally impatient. They knew him as a man, as an ordinary man, even as they sensed something greater in him. And for the moment of Transfiguration remembered to us today, they saw him in his wondrous glory. What they knew afterwards was that Jesus was the Son of God, that in him, God was working God's purposes out, by taking flesh to teach, live, die, and live again among us. They saw and experienced the great news that God had become human that we might become like God. God had taken the ordinary into his divine life, the extraordinary filling the ordinary with surging, blinding holiness.

And so bread conveys to us the Body of Christ and wine his blood.  
So the hug of a loved one brings love deeper than words.  
So water gives us the Holy Spirit and makes us members of the body and eyes that rest on lakes and sea in the summer bring minds to peace and reflection. In Christ, God has joined the ordinary and extraordinary, the glorious and the mundane, a June Saturday afternoon and a February Tuesday morning, a great transfiguring of all that is by the presence of all that will be.

How can we ever be bored? In worship, at work?  
Why do we ever itch for the new and novel, for the flashy and bright?

May we ever have eyes to perceive how near God has come,  
how ready God is to meet us,  
how graced and claimed our whole lives are,  
how worthy they are of our careful attention and cultivation,  
because of what God has done in Christ.