Unveiling Ourselves
Exodus 34:29-35; Luke 9:28 – 43

Many little girls fantasize about their perfect dream wedding thanks to the media machine, Walt Disney. Although the tradition is thankfully subsiding, some brides to be continue to choose **a veil of some type to cover their** face until the big unveiling by the groom at the altar. This practice comes from a tradition in which marriages were arranged by the bride's father or another male family **member with either the potential groom** or a male within the groom's family. It correlates with our wedding superstition that it is bad luck for the bride **and groom to see one another before** the wedding. You see if the bride to be was considered homely looking or otherwise unattractive, the groom could call off the arrangement. Thus, the bride could not be seen by her prospective **groom until, in essence it was too late for him to** cancel the deal. Therefore, she was kept hidden behind a veil.

In today's reading from Exodus we find that Moses, after having contact with God and sharing the word of God with the people of Israel, veiled himself. Our reading states, "And when Aaron and all the people **of Israel saw Moses, behold , the skin of his face shone, and** they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them… and Moses talked with them. …And when Moses had **finished speaking with them, he put a veil on** his face, but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off…" (Exodus 34:30-35) **Moses knew that which we tend to** forget. God knows our true selves, we cannot be anything other than who we are or hide behind a veil in God's presence. He also knew that the glory of God present in our lives should not be hidden **from the people. Moses allowed the light** of God to shine through him as he encountered the people. He did not keep the messages God gave him **to himself. Each time Moses had an encounter** with God, he brought the message back to the people. Perhaps Moses placed the veil upon his face because he felt, much like Peter and Paul,

unworthy of the glory of God in his life**. How are we like Moses today? What veils are we** trying to hide our guilt and shame behind?

Some of us are veiled in fear. Afraid that if we seek to cultivate an ongoing relationship **with God there will be the expectation** that we will change. Maybe God will ask us to give up something that we desperately want to cling to. We fear failure, but we also fear being the best that God calls us to be. I can tell you my **sisters and brothers all we have to do is look at today's** readings from Exodus and the gospel of Luke to know that yes, we will be changed as we enter into the presence **of God and cultivate our relationship with the Divine**. It is impossible not to be changed in the presence and glory of God. There is a transformation that **takes place in our lives.**

At times that transformation can be brilliant as in the radiance that shone from both Moses and Jesus and we know **clearly what God is asking us to do. At other times** things are not quite so brilliant, they are in fact quite dim. Perhaps some of us are more like Peter who after **seeing the radiance of God shining through** Jesus wanted to build a tent or a monument to the moment. He did not want to lose the brilliance that he saw, forgetting that God continues to shine in everyday experiences. **We, too, seek to enshrine the experiences** we have when we encounter God in our faith walk. We think of them as special moments just between us and God. **The problem with our shrines or our** tents is that we then get to decide who is allowed in and who's left out. They are also problematic in that they attempt to capture God as we want God to be. God is then available to us when we want to **go and visit, but somehow magically God is not** present in the rest of our lives. As a people of faith it is foolishness to believe that God is only present in our churches, **mosques, temples and shrines or only present when** we desire God to be. God is everywhere and ever present. There is no containing God. We see what God **thought of Peter's grand plan to erect three tents on** the mountain. A cloud came and

overshadowed the disciples and a voice said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" We are told **along with the disciples to listen to Jesus.**

We are to listen to the Light of the World. "It is to this light that we are called to be **reconnected, both within ourselves and in all things**."[1] Jesus calls us to be present, up on the mountain, and down below, in the need of the people.[2] In listening to Jesus in today's gospel message alone what do we hear**? We have Jesus going to the mountain to pray.** The message for us is that we are to be intentional about being in God's presence and to pray. Jesus is going **to the source of his help and direction** for his life. But he is not going alone. He has asked members of his community to join him in prayer. While the disciples have fallen asleep, it is God who provides Moses and **Elijah to be present with Jesus. He is not left** alone even though his friends have fallen asleep and seemingly left him in his time of need. We are never alone in **our time of need, either. We are called** to stand together as a family of faith sharing in God's presence and sharing in God's plan.

Jesus took the plan he received from **God down off of the mountaintop. He did** not seek to enshrine or leave the message on the mountain; he brought the message and mission to **the people. God's messages should** challenge us as much as they encourage us to be better human beings for the sake of God's kin-dom here on **earth. Or as Joan Chittister puts it, "At** the moment when it seems that Jesus is emphasizing the mystical dimensions of faith, he takes the disciples to **meet the needs of the people in the valley below**. …Real religion, is about healing hurts, speaking for and being with the poor, the helpless, the voiceless and the forgotten **who are at the silent bottom of … every system** in both state and church."[3] Another message

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[1] J. Philip Newell's *The Book of Creation: an Introduction to Celtic Spirituality* as quoted in UCC SAMUEL, "Astounding Glory" by Kate Huey; Luke 9:28-43
[2] Ibid, Kate Huey
[3] Joan Chittister, "The Role of Religion in Today's Society" as quoted in Brett Younger, Sermon Reviews; Lectionary Homiletics, Vol. XXI, No. 2 (Feb. 2010 –March 2010) p. 20

That Jesus provides **us in our gospel lesson is that, "Transfiguration** leads us beyond ourselves to become God's partners in healing the world. …Transfiguration leads to mission, to **letting our light shine, and giving glory to God by acts** of mercy, kindness, and justice."[4] We see this as Jesus heals the boy believed to be tormented by a demon. Modern day translations identify that this child **probably suffered from seizures, but the bigger picture** here is that Jesus relieved him of that which plagued him. God's glory is available to each of us today to free us of those things which plague and torment us. Is it an easy journey, no, but it is possible with **God. The expectation was and remains that the disciples** were to have stood on faith and performed the same miracle that Jesus did through acts of prayer, standing as a community of faith together, and believing in the **promises and presence of God. We are** called to stand together in faith and prayer expecting the still speaking God to hear our prayers and to answer us.

In "The Rabbi's Gift" we find the story of a monastery that has fallen on difficult times. The abbot visits the rabbi for advice. The rabbi offers this: 'The Messiah is among you." The abbot shares the news with the monks. **They begin to look at one another in a new light**. Is this one the Messiah? They treat one another differently. The monastery has a new spirit of **concern, compassion, and expectation."[5]**

As we enter into **our Easter season let us take on a new** spirit of concern, compassion and expectation as a community of faith. Let us be transformed during this season by being in a **collective spirit of prayer going to those places we consider** holy like the mountaintop seeking to be transfigured and transformed in the presence of God. That means we must be intentional about creating time to be in **relationship with God, devote time to prayer, meditation** and retreat from the distractions and busyness of our lives. It is during this time that we are called to **unveil ourselves and repent of our sins and to seek** to understand in what way we are living

[4] Bruce G. Epperly. "Commentary : Transfiguration Sunday" Feb. 14, 2010
[5] Brett Younger, "Sermon Reviews" Transfiguration Sunday; Feb. 14, 2010 (Lectionary Homiletics, p.18)

into the mission of God here on earth**. It is a time to discern, "In what ways are prayer** and mission, spirituality and social concern connected in [our lives]?"[6] Faith requires something of **us. As we are intentional about our prayer** life this Easter season, let us take courage in the glory of God, fully expecting to be transformed by the experience as we ask the question, "What changes are demanded of us now?" **Remembering, "Transfiguration leads us beyond** ourselves to become God's partners in healing the world. …Transfiguration leads to mission, to **letting our light shine, and giving glory to** God by acts of **mercy, kindness, and justice**."[7] Amen.

[6] Epperly, Ibid.
[7] Bruce G. Epperly. "Commentary : Transfiguration Sunday" Feb. 14, 2010