

FEBRUARY 14, 2021
LAST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
TRANSFIGURATION

Today there is a serendipitous coming together between the celebration of the Transfiguration and the date of February 14th. February 14th traditionally being Valentine's Day and a time to celebrate love. Maybe not love in the religious sense but still love, and love takes many forms. The love of Valentine's Day involves sharing – an emotion and feeling between people – from one to another. All love does that – the act of sharing and passing it on.

During the Transfiguration we hear God's voice calling Jesus his Beloved – his Son with whom he is well pleased. The same words were heard Jesus' baptism in the Jordan - the beginning of His ministry. His years of sharing and healing and teaching are bookended by these words of love. Knowing he was God's beloved was the undergirding of his ministry. These words carried him and sustained him through his years on the road. The road is now coming to an end, the love does not end, but the journey will soon. The love will continue to the cross and ever after.

John the Baptist heard the declaration of Jesus being the beloved at the beginning and Peter, James and John hear it now nearer the end. They might not have fully understood, but they heard the pronouncement loud and clear.

Have you been called beloved? The heavens may not have opened but those words have been spoken and you may not have heard them. Spoken in a whisper, spoken in events, spoken in blessings, spoken in the love between you and others, between you and God. Spoken by a priest at your baptism and each time you receive communion. All those things for which we are grateful are expressions of being God's beloved - our health, our way of life, our families and friends, our community – the list goes on.

Our calling is to take that love and share it. Yesterday Sr Victoria Michelle gave a retreat on "Knowing who you are in Christ". That knowledge is the basis for expanding our circle of love.

Bp. Curry has said that “for centuries, monastic communities have shaped their lives around rhythms and disciplines for following Jesus together.” The Bishop’s mission is a call for all of us to take Jesus’ love and use it to shape our lives and that of others. Take the love out into the world. Our boundaries for that are not just a religious community or a parish but in everything and every encounter—wherever we go, whatever we do. Expanding on this idea, the Episcopal Church has developed guidelines for doing that. Most of us have at least a passing knowledge of them but to remind you, they are: turn, learn, pray, worship, bless, go, and rest. All of these are tough assignments. They definitely push me out of my comfort zone. Some of us have grown up in religious backgrounds where speaking of faith and urging others to follow Jesus were part of that denomination’s ethos. I did not experience that. I grew up in the frozen and introverted Episcopal church of the 50’s and 60’s. That is probably why I find Bp. Curry’s message and way of delivering it to be radical and a test to my natural inclinations.

Of all the steps, it was the last that caught my attention. I could relate to the other 6 steps – ones that I had heard before. But rest? I was sure it did not mean to rest on my laurels or to pat myself on the back for doing the other steps. But a different rest. A time to reflect on what I had learned along the way. A pause to embody the other practices. Bp. Curry likens it to God resting on the seventh day – resting because He saw it was good.

The Way to Love reminds us that resting in God’s love restores us and gives us the opportunity to absorb what we have learned and to maintain ourselves as useful instruments of God. Silence, prayer and meditation are some of the ways to accomplish that.

Remember all the steps and most of all, remember to rest and feel God’s love.