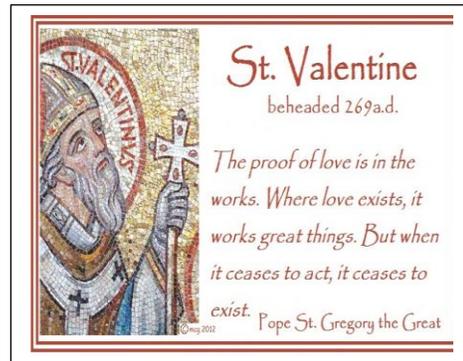


## Coop's Scoops # 163: Sunday Sermon and Liturgy, February 14, 2021

As we worship while apart, I wish you all a very happy Valentine's Day! Not the Hallmark one, but the Saint Valentine real one. Well, maybe real. Here's what we know: **The St. Valentine who inspired the holiday may have been two different men.** Officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, St. Valentine is known to be a real person who

died around A.D. 270. However, his true identity was questioned as early as A.D. 496 by Pope Gelasius I, who referred to the martyr and his acts as "being known only to God." One account from the 1400s describes Valentine as a temple priest who was beheaded near Rome by the emperor Claudius II for helping Christian couples wed. A different account claims Valentine was the Bishop of Terni, also martyred by Claudius II on the outskirts of Rome. Because of the similarities of these accounts, it's thought they may refer to the same person. Enough confusion surrounds the true identity of St. Valentine that the Catholic Church discontinued liturgical veneration of him in 1969, though his name remains on its list of officially recognized saints. So, like many traditions, this one remains wrapped in mystery, but if it's all about love, can't be all wrong! **So God loves you, and I love you, and Fred over there, well, he's working on it!**



### Sentence: Last After Epiphany: The Transfiguration of the Lord

This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!

Readings: Daniel 7: 9-10;13-14 Ps 99 2 Peter 1: 16-19

### The Collect:

Almighty God, on the holy mount you revealed to chosen witnesses your well-beloved Son, wonderfully transfigured; mercifully deliver us from the darkness of this world, and change us into his likeness from glory to glory;

through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **The Holy Gospel: Luke 9: 28-36**

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup> Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. <sup>31</sup> They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake,<sup>[b]</sup> they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup> Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,<sup>[c]</sup> one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” —not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup> While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen;<sup>[d]</sup> listen to him!” <sup>36</sup> When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.



### **The Sermon:**

Peter and James and John got up at dawn that long ago day, just as they did every day. Jesus was heading off to pray, just as He did every day. This day, Jesus was heading up a hill called Mount Tabor – He didn’t do that every day, but this is where they were...at the base of the holy Mount where tradition taught them that Moses spoke face to face with God. Jesus called the three of them to walk with Him and stay nearby while He prayed. They liked that...that sense of being the inner circle...this was not the first time Jesus called the three of them together.

And so it was a day like many others, and yet before the sun set, everything would change.

I wonder if Peter and James and John would have even wanted to go if they had known what was about to happen, You see, it wasn't all light and glory for them...they were about to be terrified – scared witless – and nobody ever really looks forward to that.

Let's see how it developed. Jesus is praying. Just as He is finishing His prayers; and His disciples have almost fallen asleep waiting for Him... Moses and Elijah appear. Peter and James and John somehow know who they are, no introductions necessary. Jesus garments became whiter and whiter and whiter and His face shone with the glory that they knew was the glory of God. The two ancient prophets and the living Son of God were not talking about happy things...they were talking about how Jesus intended to accomplish His departure. His dying. Jesus was not glowing with joy, he was glowing with the Father's glory.

Seeing this, Peter blurts out his request that they make some tents for Jesus and Moses and Elijah to stay and live in, from there on and forevermore. It's silly really, because Jesus has just been teaching His disciples about what is going to happen when He enters Jerusalem. Peter is trying to be in control, to prevent what Jesus has told him most clearly must happen. Lest we be too hard on Peter, we need to remember that Peter is just trying to prolong the moment, to hang on to the spiritual glory and never let it go. He would have stopped time if he could. But as soon as the words leave his mouth, he's emotionally knocked right off his feet. A cloud envelops them. That is terrifying. Why? Because every son and every daughter of Israel knew that if you ever saw the face of God, you would die. They **had** seen the God-man Jesus revealed, and the gathering cloud could mean but one thing.. they were about to die right there and right then. Scary. Surprise, though, God is a surprise! And the voice of God came out of the cloud saying **"This is my Son, my beloved. Listen to Him."**

They then saw Jesus only, and they walked down the hill together, and obediently kept silent about what had happened. They could never explain it. Better to just do what Mary did, and ponder these things in their hearts. We know that Peter pondered it mightily because about twenty years later, Peter pens a letter to encourage new Christians to stand firm in the faith. We call that letter 2 Peter, and in chapter 1:16, Peter defends the Christian faith saying: **"It is**

no “fable, no cleverly devised story...it is true, and I know its true because I saw for myself the glorious majesty of God lightened about our Lord”. Peter is not telling about an event he has merely heard of, he is speaking about an event to which he was an eye-witness. A truth he passed on to multitudes of people before dying a martyrs death. His terror, in God’s time, became the source of his strength.

Where does this account take you this morning? This is where it took me... I realized that my greatest moments of clarity...my own Epiphanys when fresh light filled my soul, most often happened through circumstances I could not control, and in places where I myself would rather not have been. Is that also true for you? In your journeys through suffering and fear, have you found it to be true that in time, those journeys also brought insights, re-directions, and growth .I’m sure we would all be amazed if we shared our stories, and I am equally sure that we all have one to share.

Looking back in hindsight is one thing,...how about taking the step of faith to look into the future? What about the terrifying things that may still occur? And are, in fact, occurring globally right now. The only thing we seem to know these days is that we “don’t know”. We live in a world filled with dire possibilities and possible disasters some related to the pandemic, some not. We can take comfort that the same Jesus who led those disciples up the hill into terror, also led them down the hill. The hardest thing now, as then, is giving up our sense of entitlement to control. The hardest thing is to peaceably trust and obey the Holy Spirit....to hear and to follow. That is hard for individuals and it is also hard for congregations, for deaneries and for dioceses.

We need to remember that the real epiphany of the Transfiguration was not the reappearance of Israel’s greatest prophets. It was not even the light and glory on Jesus face and clothing. It WAS the voice of God, coming from the cloud of terror, saying “ **This is my Son. The Beloved. Listen to Him.**”

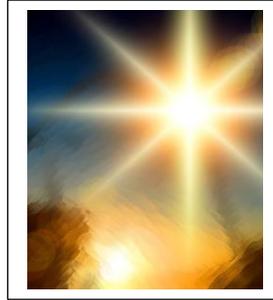
**So if you ever find yourself lost in a cloud of terror, Jesus is your true north star. If you find yourself lost in a crowd of unfamiliar or clamoring voices, listen to Him. Follow Him.** We are about to make a new journey into Lent: a period of self–examination and repentance and sacrifice. A season that many of us wouldn’t choose if it were left up to us. But enter we shall. May the Holy Spirit help us to open ourselves to all that God has to teach us and then ready our feet to be led up whatever hill Jesus may beckon us to climb- following Him – and seeing His glory. Amen.

**Prayer:**

Lord the Light of your Love is shining,  
In the midst of the darkness shining;  
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;  
Set us free by the truth you now bring us,  
Shine on me, shine on me!

Shine, Jesus, shine; fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze; set our hearts on fire  
Flow, River, flow flood the nations with grace and mercy  
Send forth your word, Lord, and let there be Light!

(Even so, Lord Jesus, shine on us, and through us....Shine, Jesus, shine!)



**Blessing:**

The **LORD bless you and keep you**; the **LORD** make his face to shine upon **you** and be gracious to **you**; the **LORD** lift up his countenance upon **you** and give **you** peace. Amen.

- Judie+