

Pre-Lenten Intergenerational Ash Sunday  
Matthew 17:1-9 Book of Truth 1:1-4  
February 23, 2020

Have you ever had one of those moments, a mystical moment, when time seems to stand still? When things seem crystal clear? When you felt overwhelmed by something beyond yourself?

...a moment in worship, a moment with a child, a moment with a lover, a moment in nature, a moment of in-lightenment?

These moments are called numinous, meaning they go beyond anything we can rationally describe or explain.

Without knowing why or how, the moment, filled with awe, is over taking, urgent, beyond fascinating. We are drawn into it...and want to stay there. ...if only we could.

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And on that mountain top, Jesus may have had such a numinous moment. A moment that transcended time...for Jesus...for those present...and so for us!

Jesus' glows as he connects deeply with heavenly/divine love and wisdom (sharing also then with energies of Elijah and Moses).

That moment was not of the past or the future but an amazing present...presence connecting Him with all the generations.

This numinous moment becomes a turning point for Him, bringing Him

down that mountain into a real world, into humanity, to be in ministry.

A turbulent moment filled with truth and joy.

In a way, it is a new baptism...not of fire or water...but love so powerful, He could no longer just talk the talk; He had to walk the walk. He goes down the mountainside a changed human, fully divine and so, more fully human.

But the disciples weren't in the moment, even though it was happening right before their very eyes. They were thinking about the future...trying to make this moment last...hanging on to it...as if hanging on tightly to something good can make it last.

Sometimes we think turning points/numinous moments can't last and so, we, too, want to set apart those places and times in an effort to make them last.

Like them, we want to build a "monument" of memory there. We convince ourselves the present moment could never match that moment or be its fulfillment.

Sorta' like taking a photo of a sunset vs really enjoying the sunset moment. And that photo becomes the memory vs the feeling the sunset evoked.

Like the disciples we, too, try to hang on to those moments. But no need. Holy moments happen every day when you live in the present.

Thinking about the past and the future can be helpful at times, but as a life pattern, it is a stall pattern for avoiding the present.

Hope is in the present.

When we are in the present moment...

often full of turbulence/challenge/chaos/commotion, often, only then may we be transfigured, transformed.

A blessed restlessness comes to us that sets us up for a real choice about what comes next.

Everyday mountaintop experiences bringing us new choices:

praying while you're doing the dishes,  
connecting with the Creator while gardening,  
watching children play or sleep,  
loving your family by folding the laundry,  
lighting a candle quietly,  
the way you appreciate each mouthful at mealtime,

coming along side someone in distress even when you don't know how to help,  
hearing complaints as calls for help,  
seeing what is done rather than not done.

Turbulence...at a job, in an argument, as your health changes.

Sacred everyday moments that can change you if you let them.

God's loving and gracious power descends through all the generations in Christ...to you!

Aware of the past, stand firmly in the present, turning toward the future. Yes, it can be scary. But...

all the generations stand with you in the power of the moment.  
We stand with each other in the name of love. You are not alone.  
Live the fullness of the whole of your story: be courage.

This experience is the turning point in Jesus ministry. It turned Him inward and so out toward the people and toward Jerusalem...the Lenten Journey.

God's words on this mountain top echo the words spoken at Jesus baptism. "This is my son, the beloved, listen to him."

It is as if the journey through Epiphany has *come* full circle, yet we don't find ourselves back at the same point.

The point is, Jesus allowed Himself to be changed in the moment by the presence of God in His life.

Midst all the turbulence...perhaps, because of it?  
...He was changed.

He goes right down the side of this moment with a dedication of spirit and energy to be new and to help others.

Fully human. Fully Divine.

The world has not seen the likes of Him since.

You know what?

Sunday after Sunday, as I have the great privilege to look out into your faces. I can see what you may not have seen.

You shine. You are a part of the shining. Turbulence and all.

How do you want to let your shine show?

What is God inviting you to turn toward or become this Lent?

...to turn away from this Lent?

It's time to go down the mountain side and turn toward new ministry, new life!

And we are at Ash...Sunday.

A time when we know we face Jerusalem...turbulence, chaos, commotion and all.  
Know life is hard and we have choices to make. *Another day in the life.*

We either stand still, stuck right where we are, or we see the truth.

We allow the love of the generations to fill us, let the awe guide us, surround ourselves with a few Elijah's, Moses's, and disciples and go down the mountainside...or we don't!

Ash Sunday allows us to face our fears and live freely  
this incredible, mortal life that is our reality right now  
....turbulence and all.

It helps us to let go of fear. Because Ash Wednesday reminds us that in spite of it all, death does not have the last word.

And neither do we!

The death dealing ways of this world do not have the last word.  
Nothing can stop God's life giving ways in us and in the world.

Ashes mark our foreheads. We become aware of our vulnerability but held within  
God's numinous presence in our every moment.

We deeply hear the quiet words of Matthew's gospel:  
"Be not afraid. I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The beauty of Ash Wednesday is that it cuts through the turbulence.

It gets to the heart of the very heart of everything.  
It reminds us of God's infinite promise to us.

It reminds us there is beauty in our brokenness,  
truth in the turbulence,  
and freedom that we don't have to live up to  
some earthly falsehood about perfection.

We are not God.  
In this way, being merely dust is a good and right perspective on life.

We are open to God's power which transcends death into life.

The Truth in the turbulence can set us free from the death dealing ways of the world,  
moving us toward fullness and joy.

So, shout it from the roof tops, sing it in your heart,  
whisper it quietly to yourself, but live into Truth...

Then, breathe a sigh of relief and be free.

O mortal, you are dust, and to dust you shall return.  
You are not in charge of the Universe!  
And no one else is either!

Thanks be to God indeed.