



Violence Destroys; Beauty Transforms
Homily for the feast of the Transfiguration
August 5/6, 2017 – 5:00 p.m., 8:00 a.m., 12 Noon

1. Ten years ago this summer I presided at the funeral of a 26 year old man who had been killed by his next door neighbor
 - 3 young people – including a couple engaged to be married - all gunned down on the same night because they were blowing off fireworks after Midnight
 - you can imagine the depth of despair, sorrow, anger, and fear that overwhelmed the congregation
 - How could this have happened? Why such a senseless loss of life? Where was God in the midst of all this pain?
 - What words can you say that can lift the pain of such a horrific sorrow?
 - At the funeral, a member of the Cleveland Orchestra played the violin
 - And during the recessional, the violinist lead the casket through the church and out the front doors playing a sweet melody that soothed, and comforted, and inspired the hearts of everyone present
 - it was a transformative moment, a brief respite from the numbing effect of violence, a momentary repair of hearts broken with grief
 - I remember going up to the violinist and telling her, “violence destroys but beauty restores and transforms. Thank you for helping us to pray through this loss”
 - With her music, there were no words necessary
 - Beauty took us to a place where words and explanations and theories could not go
 - a place of comfort, a place of hope, a place of peace

2. I imagine that the restorative moment for the disciples James and John occurred when Jesus was transfigured on the top of Mt. Tabor
 - after Jesus told them he would suffer many things, the news was overwhelming more than they could deal with, unbelievable and certainly unexpected
 - Peter didn’t like Jesus talking about these things nor did the disciples want to believe that death was his fate, that suffering and pain were on the horizon
 - after all, Jesus didn’t deserve it – it seemed all so unfair, so unreal

3. So, Jesus, goes up to the mountaintop to pray
 - there he meets Moses and Elijah – the prophets who proclaimed the promised land, and the Messiah to come
 - and Jesus is transfigured before their eyes
 - it was as if God had put his arms around Jesus saying, “I know this is an incredibly tough thing for you to do, but you have my support and help. You won’t be going through this alone.”
 - the disciples also needed this assurance
 - their faith was being shattered into a thousand pieces
 - everything would be turned upside down when Jesus was arrested, persecuted, crucified

- they needed the assurance – like the violinist – who offers a respite in the midst of the darkest sorrow – I am with you . . . always
4. Hearing the words, “this is my beloved son” gave assurance and confidence
 - that moment in time would so affect them that Peter actually refers to it in today’s second reading – written over 30 years after the experience had passed
 - it had been so life-changing, so powerful, so impactful, that it was remembered and re-told some 30 year later
 5. Moments like that – and each of us have them – stay with us forever
 - perhaps it was a time you most felt the presence of God in your life
 - maybe it was when a revelation came to you; an understanding or realization or acceptance
 - I can remember a time, 33 years ago, when my life changed forever
 - 33 years ago and I can remember it as if it were yesterday
 - a moment in time when I was made aware of God’s closeness to me; and a feeling I experience I had that has never left me
 6. Sometimes we can be the instrument God uses
 - often words I have spoken, thoughts I have conveyed, acts that I have performed have shown God’s presence to someone else without even me knowing it
 - I’m amazed at God’s faithfulness when we’re willing to show up, to give our best, to place our gifts, and talents and abilities at God’s disposal
 - and sometimes it can be just dumb luck – showing up at the right place and the right time for God to work through us
 7. The Eucharist is also one of the transformative events for our lives
 - bread and wine, offered as co-created gifts – God who provides the wheat and the grapes
 - we who offer what we have created back to God
 - and God offering us back his Son’s body and blood as bread for our journey, a cup of blessing for our lives; nourishment in God’s love
 8. How have you been transformed by God’s saving love? What moment or moments in your life carry you through? What ways have you been called do bring God’s encouragement and hope to others?
 9. In a world with so much ugliness, so much darkness, so much despair, even the smallest light can make a difference, can matter
 - It doesn’t take very much – often a willing heart, a little bit of talent and a generous spirit is all it takes
 - because, like a violin, in the hands of a Master
 - the simplest of melodies can inspire hope, comfort doubts and transform hearts forever