**TRANSFIGURATION 2017**

The Old Testament lesson from Exodus, the Epistle from Second Peter and Matthew’s Gospel message about the Transfiguration of Jesus are all appropriately placed on the Last Sunday after the Epiphany, which is this Sunday, just before the beginning of Lent. Moses meeting with God on Mount Sinai was important for the people of Israel as they began what would be their 40 year journey, through the wilderness, to the promised land. And so, the witnessing of the Transfiguration of Jesus and the acknowledgement by God that Jesus was indeed his son, with whom God was well pleased, was important to Peter, James and John as they neared the end of their time with Jesus and headed into the terrifying reality of his ultimate passion and death. It is Peter, one of the fortunate disciples to actually witness the Transfiguration of Jesus and also the one who would deny him at the end, who later writes to the faithful followers of Jesus, reminding them that he, Peter, knows what he is talking about since he and the others witnessed Jesus receiving honor and glory from God as His beloved Son. These readings are important to us as we are about to set out on our own 40 day journeys through Lent. It is as though God offers himself to light our way through the 40 days of Lent, so hopefully, we too can be transfigured and transformed come Easter Sunday.

A few weeks ago I ran across a video that appeared first on TV in Denmark entitled “All that we share”. The Video lasts for 3 minutes and has been viewed over two and a half million times on YouTube. In it, groups of Danish people come on stage, stepping into tape lined boxes,, marked on the floor for their designated group. The announcer says “It’s easy to put people in boxes. There’s us and there’s them. The first group out appear to be nurses in uniform; others are designated by “The high earners” or “those just getting by”; “the new Danes” or “those who have always been here’; “Those we trust or those we avoid”; “People from the countryside and those who have never seen a cow”. Then the announcer asks them some questions, the first being “ who was the class clown”. The mood changes as they laugh and some leave their boxes and move together to form a new group. The next group are step-parents, followed by those who believe in life after death, those who have seen UFO’s, those who love to dance, those who have been bullied, and those who hang their heads because they have bullied others. Laughter erupts when the announcer invites the lucky ones, those who have had sex this past week to step forward. They are followed by those who are broken hearted, those who are madly in love and those who feel lonely. It ends with this “And then there is all of us who just love Denmark, so maybe there is more that brings us together than we think.” For me, the part that really moved me when I watched the video was witnessing the transformation of the people in the video. When they come on stage in their groups and stand across from those who aren’t like them, they look uncomfortable and defensive. As they begin to move from their original groups into the new groupings with those from the other groups, they smile, laugh, clap for the courage of others and in the end, touch and hug each other. They are transformed before our eyes, I think, because they are moved to see before their very eyes the Great Commandment of God, to love our neighbor as ourselves. I invite you to watch the video on YouTube and see the transformation for yourselves. The title is “All that we share”. If you don’t have a computer or smart phone to view it on, you are welcome to view it on my phone or computer.

Frederick Buechner, in his book *The Clown in the Belfry: Writings on Faith and Fiction,* summarizes the Bible in this way: “I think it is possible to say that in spite of all its extraordinary variety, the Bible is held together by having a single plot. It is one that can be simply stated: God creates the world; the world gets lost; God seeks to restore the world to the glory for which God created it. “ So following Buechners plot line, I think we can see that Jesus was sent to help restore this lost world. Jesus is the model for us to be transformed so this world can be restored to be the Kingdom that God created it to be. In today’s Gospel, God has shone the light on Jesus so that he can light the way to our Lenten transformation. Lent is just 3 days away. It’s not too early to begin thinking of what you can do during Lent towards your own transformation. Christians who observe Lent typically make a commitment to fast, or to give up something, a habit, such as smoking, watching TV, or swearing, or a food or drink, such as sweets, chocolate or coffee. Some take on a Lenten discipline, such as reading the Bible or Lenten meditations and spending more time in prayer. The idea is to turn more toward God, to turn to the light of Christ, the role model for us always, but especially during Lent. There was a Christian movement a few years ago, “What would Jesus do?” There were bracelets with WWJD on them. I wore one for a while. I haven’t seen any of the bracelets in a while but Lent is a good time to ponder “What would Jesus Do?” when we are confronted with something in our lost world. So in the next few days, think about your Lenten 40 days and how you can transform yourself and help restore our lost world to Gods Kingdom and glory. If you get stuck along the way, just ask yourself, “What would Jesus do?” May it be so.