

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the **person who produces the bulletin**.

Bulletin Bites

August 6, 2017

Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord

Matthew 17:1-9

Option 1

“This is my chosen Son; listen to him.”

Mount Tabor is a craggy, steep, cone-shaped mountain south-east of Nazareth. There is a church on top of the mountain that commemorates the Transfiguration with chapels full of beautiful paintings, murals and mosaics depicting the event; Jesus with the three disciples, Jesus with Moses and Elijah; and of course, Jesus in dazzlingly white clothes. The art work is based on the record of the Transfiguration in the Gospels, but is ultimately the product of the imagination of the artist. The real meaning of the Transfiguration, like all Revelation in the Old and New Testaments, is God's love for His creation and His hope that we will be aware of His love for us. Moses conveyed God's commandment that we love God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength; and love our neighbor as ourselves. Elijah conveyed God's promise that he would send a Messiah. Jesus revealed himself as our Savior and Lord, our Messiah. Do we believe that?

Option 2

**“Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents,
One for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”**

The Transfiguration occurred just after Jesus predicted his suffering and death and explained the conditions of discipleship. When Peter observed Jesus change in appearance and conversing with Moses, the Great Law Giver, and Elijah, the Great Prophet, he was at first frightened, but then felt privileged and secure. He proposed to make three tents or dwellings. It is possible Peter wanted to keep Jesus safe. He may have wanted to avoid the risk of discipleship. We sometimes want to build a tent and stay in our comfort zone, rather than imitate Jesus and risk the consequences of being a disciple of Jesus. That is particularly true when we feel called to be good stewards of God's world by fully sharing of our time, abilities and resources. In the end, the Father leaves us no choice, **“This is my chosen Son; listen to him.**

August 13, 2017
Nineteenth Sunday In Ordinary Time
Matthew 14:22-33

Option 1

“Oh you of little faith, why do you doubt?”

Today’s Gospel passage about Jesus approaching the apostles walking on the water in stormy weather follows immediately after last Sunday’s Gospel story about thousands of people eating their fill after Jesus takes bread, blesses it, and distributes it to the people. After stepping out of the boat to go to Jesus Peter starts to sink. He pleads to Jesus who lifts him up after chastising him for his lack of faith. It is tempting to be critical of Peter for losing faith in Jesus. But Peter did get out of the boat and step onto the water in violation of all he had experienced during a lifetime of working on the water as a fisherman. That took a great act of faith. But a single act of faith in Jesus is not sufficient for a true disciple. We must constantly renew and demonstrate our faith in Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God and our faith in ourselves as children of God made in his image. As disciples we are stewards of that faith, responsible for making it grow and mature.

Option 2

“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

Fear, disbelief, amazement and reassurance are just some of the emotions the disciples experienced when they saw Jesus walking toward their boat on the wind tossed waters of the Sea of Galilee. It is Peter who speaks to the person on the water. Notice he says, “If it is you . . .” Obviously, he is not sure. But at least he has the courage to ask. Then he says, “command me to come to you . . .” Peter hopes it is Jesus and he may even have believed it was Jesus. He wants to go to Jesus. But he does not want to take the responsibility for stepping out of the boat in the event he is wrong. He wants Jesus to “command” him so if he fails it is Jesus’ fault. Before we judge Peter and the other disciples too harshly we should reflect on our reaction when we sense Jesus is calling us, through his presence in the midst of turmoil and uncertainty, to step out of our comfort zone into a strange or risky situation. Do we have the faith, hope and courage to do so without being “commanded” by Jesus? Are we willing to be responsible for our faith?

August 20, 2017
Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Matthew 15:21-28

Option 1

“Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters.”

Terah took his son Abram and the rest of his family from Ur in Chaldea [Iraq] north to Haran [Turkey]. Then God instructed Abram to take his family south to Canaan. The descendants of Abram [Abraham] moved into Canaan and capture their land. That caused an enduring animosity between the Canaanites and the Israelites. It is in this context we must understand what appears to be a harsh reaction of Jesus to the plea of the Canaanite woman, “Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David!” Jesus does not ignore or reject the woman. His response tests her faith and the faith of his disciples. Is the woman sincere in her belief or is she testing Jesus? Do his disciples truly believe he is the “Son of David”? When she persists Jesus says to her, “O woman, great is your

faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” The life of Jesus on this earth began when another woman of great faith said, “May it be done unto me according to your word.” Do we truly believe that faith can accomplish great things? Do we act like we believe?

Option 2

“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.”

Jesus speaks to the Canaanite (gentile) woman who approached Him for help in a way we might consider harsh, She was not deterred by His initial rebuff. She persisted because she wanted help for her daughter. Jesus noted that He was sent to the house of Israel that failed to recognize Him as the Messiah because of unfounded expectations. He sees in a non-Israelite woman the faith that was lacking in the house of Israel. The woman had no such expectations. She had a personal encounter with Jesus; she saw what he did and believed what he said. She knew she could turn to Him and He could help her daughter. Jesus proclaims that she is a person of great faith and her wish will be fulfilled. What is the nature of our faith in Jesus, unfounded expectations that are an obstacle to true belief in Him or a personal relationship with Him as Messiah and Lord? Will Jesus tell us “Great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you wish.”

August 27, 2017

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Matthew 13:16-20

Option 1

“But who do you say that I am?”

Jesus retreats with his disciples to the forested hills and refreshing streams of the region near Caesarea Philippi (in Syria) for some private time with them to reflect on what they have seen and heard. After asking what others say about him, he ask his disciples “But who do you say that I am?” Despite religious, social and family influences that prevented others from recognizing the Messiah, Simon Peter accepts responsibility for his own faith and declares, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus uses the occasion to give Peter (The Rock) responsibility for preserving and passing on that faith to others. As a consequence of our baptism we each have a share in the responsibility for preserving and passing on that faith. That requires a mature and constantly growing faith. A simple test: How would we answer Jesus if he ask, “But who do you say that I am?” What would we say to other who ask, “Who is Jesus?”

Option 2

“But who do you say that I am?”

It is Peter who responds to Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” We tend to take Peter’s response for granted. Surely, after all he had heard and seen it was obvious that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. Before we get to much exercise jumping to conclusions, let us examine the implications of Peter’s response. Peter was not just a fisherman. He was in the fishing business with his brother Andrew and Zebedee, father of James and John. Fishing was a relatively lucrative trade. Peter was a substantial member of his community. When Jesus ask “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” other disciples waltz around the question. But when Jesus ask, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answers with a statement of faith that many, particularly the Jewish leaders, considered to be heresy and could put at risk Peter’s

financial security, his family and his life. Such faith is a gift from God. He wants all of us to have it. But, like Peter, we must choose to accept, proclaim and live our faith.