



From the Pastor
The Transfiguration
of the Lord - A
August 6, 2023

LOOK BEYOND THE BREAD YOU EAT. In reflection #7 on *Pope Francis' 2022 Apostolic Letter, 'Desiderio Desideravi,'* Latin for *Jesus' pre-Last Supper* words: *"I have earnestly*

desired [to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.]" [Luke 22:15] we ponder two often misunderstood and misused words: sign and symbol. *'Desiderio Desideravi'* dovetails so perfectly with my years-long series on the **2022-2025 National Eucharistic Revival** that this is **Part #36** of my reflections on the *Eucharist*. All previous articles may be found on our *Parish website*.

FULLY REVEALED. By ancient tradition, *Christ's Transfiguration* is proclaimed on **August 6, 40 days** before the **Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross** on **September 14**, and on the **2nd Sunday of Lent**, about the same time before **Good Friday**. In both cases, it prepares us for the *"scandal of the Cross"* [Preface for the Transfiguration] and reveals *Christ's full* identity as one of us, a human person **AND** as our *God* who fulfills the *Law* and the *Prophets*, represented, respectively, by *Moses* and *Elijah*. Three *Apostles: Peter, James* and *John* saw what was there but was hidden beneath *Christ's* human *Body*: they glimpsed His *Divinity* 'veiled' by His human *Flesh*.

Although those three *Apostles* had a glimpse of *Christ's Divinity* 'hidden' within His *Humanity*, and witnessed the miracles that confirmed His *Divinity*, they struggled to accept how *Jesus*, whose *Humanity* was so evident when He was tired, hungry or overwhelmed, could also be *God*. Likewise, some struggle with - or even reject - how *Christ* can be *'truly present'* in the *Eucharistic Bread* and *Wine*. So, as we celebrate the *Transfiguration*, we ask *Jesus* to help us accept what the *Apostles* eventually accepted: that He is truly *God*, truly the *Risen Lord*, who is also truly present in the *Eucharist*.

As *Pope Francis* points out in his *Letter*, this is not a mental exercise, although academic reflection and study is essential for those who wish to try to grasp this miraculous article of our *Faith*. It is a down-to-earth, humble acceptance of what *God* began by creating the world, through which

He reveals His majesty and glory. While *God's* self-revelation reached its pinnacle in the Incarnation, when *God* became *Flesh* and lived among us in *Jesus*, the *Eucharist* enables this *Divine Presence* to not only continue ... but to do so in a way that enables *God* to literally enter us so that we can become like *God*! As *Pope Saint Leo the Great* said, *"Our participation in the Body and Blood of Christ has no other end than to make us become that which we eat."*

The *Transfiguration* also shows how *God* used, and continues to use, ordinary earthly things to reveal and make present extraordinary, heavenly realities. That's why *Sacraments* and *Sacred Liturgies* use *tangible* items: *bread, wine, oil, water, fragrances, fire, ashes, rock, fabrics, colors*, body, words, sounds, silences, gestures, space, movement, action, order, time, light, to convey *spiritual* graces. However, unless we appreciate the 'sign' or 'symbol' 'beneath' or 'hidden in' these outward signs, we can easily miss their point and purpose. Let me try to explain this idea by using two very familiar and very prominent 'signs' or 'symbols': *bread* and *wine*.

To make *bread*, we need *God's* gifts of the land, water, seeds and sun, to name a few; *human labor* is needed to sow, nurture, reap the harvest, mix, knead and bake the *bread* - which is formed from many individual grains of *wheat* blended together into one loaf. To make *wine*, we also need the same gifts from *God* and our *human labor*; but to ferment, the juice of the *grapes* must be 'buried' in a dark, tomb-like cask. This imagery should bring to mind the *Eucharistic* mystery.

Like the grains of *wheat* that are gathered into one to form one loaf, each *Christian*, through *Baptism*, is joined to the *Lord* and to one another to form one *Church*. And as *grapes* are crushed and fermented into *wine*, we, like *Christ*, whose *Body* was broken and whose *Blood* was poured out on the *Cross*, are called to die to self, and accept any sufferings we might endure for the sake of the *Gospel*. Could it be that the reason so many people see weekly *Holy Communion* as 'optional' is that they do not appreciate these 'signs' and 'symbols' beneath the *Eucharistic Signs* and *Symbols*?

In His holy Name,

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