

Homily - Lent 2 - B - February 25, 2018

A few days ago someone asked me what color my car is. An innocent enough question. Actually, I have not seen the true color of my car since some time in December before it became covered with sand, salt, and ice. By the way, it is black.

Since December or so much of our life has been covered over by road salt, snow, sand, and dirt. However, as the days get longer, and as our hopes get stronger, we are looking forward to seeing our lives once again. We know everything is there. We just can't see it.

Well, in today's gospel, just the opposite happens. Peter, James, and John thought that they could see Christ. That is, until they go up on a mountain with him and suddenly experience a transfigured Christ. As the gospel writer tells us, his clothes became dazzling white. While that may sound like a laundry detergent commercial, it means that now they are able to see the fullness of Jesus. My salt-laden car looks ok, but it will be much more dazzling once it goes through the car wash, or heaven forbid, once I wash it myself. Just as someone who has cataract surgery can now see the world much more clearly, so too, the three disciples now see so much more of Jesus than they ever thought possible.

Try to imagine what you would do if you were Peter, James, or John. When Jesus started to dazzle and then when Moses and Elijah appeared, would you reach into your pocket for a cell phone to get a picture of the moment maybe even a selfie?

In the gospel story Peter wants to build three tents: one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. These tents are shrines, shrines to commemorate the event and the experience. Today, we still build shrines, but with digital photography we readily take pictures for the very same reason: to capture the event and the experience.

But can we really capture the event and the experience whether it's a shrine or a digital picture or even a video? Certainly, the event can be captured in pixels or on film whether stills or video. The picture will show exactly the event, what happened.

But can a picture capture the experience? Peter, James, and John were so moved by the transfiguration of Jesus that they wanted to capture especially what they experienced. For them, the tents or the shrines would be a reminder of their experience, to help them experience all over again what they experienced in that moment of transfiguration.

Have you ever been invited to someone's home to see their vacation pictures? Personally, I find that very difficult. They want to share with me what they experienced during vacation. Admittedly, I can see the events, what they did, but it is very hard to share their enthusiasm, their enjoyment, and the thrills that they experienced during their vacation. We can enjoy their enthusiasm, but we cannot have the same enthusiasm as they do.

Peter, James, and John knew the excitement of this moment with Jesus. They experienced his divinity; they experienced Jesus as they had never experienced him before. Naturally, they want to reproduce and relive this experience as often as possible by building the shrines.

All of us have very special spiritual moments every now and then. Likewise, our lives are like being on a roller coaster. We have high moments, and then some low moments. We would love to capture those high spiritual moments and put them in a jar so that when we come up short in life we could go to the cupboard and take out our saved jar of spiritual euphoria.

In a way, though, we can do that. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist there is more than a transfiguration. There is a transubstantiation, bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. In addition to that radical change of bread and wine, we can actually take this body and blood of Christ into our lives thus allowing Christ to transform our lives. This Eucharist, so to speak, transfigures us. We do not dazzle or become snowy white, but we are transformed.

So, today, as we celebrate this Eucharist together perhaps we can see ourselves as the tents or shrines that Peter wanted to build. May we become what we receive. May we truly be the Body of Christ in our world to our brothers and sisters. We have participated in the event of the Eucharist. Let us make sure that we share the experience of the Eucharist.