

- Transfiguration Sunday: Annual Meeting – March 3, 2019

- to transfigure
- **to transform into something more beautiful**
- when I was a very little girl, I had an image of God that looked very much like a powerful old man who could take care of things for us if we convinced him to do exactly what we wanted him to do
- my childhood vision of what God looked like may have been a bit fuzzy, but the powers of this powerful old man were always at my disposal
- for instance, if I behaved in a certain way I was convinced that I could convince this powerful old man, who lived up in the sky to take care of my mother
- I was convinced that simply by not stepping on any cracks in the sidewalk, the old man in the sky would see to it that my mother's back would not be broken
- Because everyone in my little world knew that if you step on a crack you break your mother's back
- So I made sure to always step over the cracks and as far as I can tell the old man in the sky kept his end of the bargain
- As I grew older my image of God was **transfigured from an old man in the sky**, into a mysterious being, that was all powerful, ever present, and all knowing
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- This omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, presence was always available to hear my prayer – and if this omni being didn't do exactly what I wanted this omni being to do, then it was because this omni being was omniscient – all knowing and so this wise being knew better than I what was good for me
- As I have grown even older there has been another transfiguration
- **The image of the omni god has transfigured into something far more beautiful**
- The MYSTERY that is the source of all existence, the MYSTERY that lies at the very heart of reality, the MYSTERY in which I live and move and have my being is so much more than a person
- The MYSTERY is a power that Jesus described as LOVE –
- While I sometimes miss the omni-person that dwelt somewhere else, I find the MYSTERY that is LOVE so much more compelling

- My image of the DIVINE has been transfigured into something so much more beautiful that I have words to describe
- The power of the LOVE that allures us – tempts us toward visions of what might be if we allowed ourselves to be transfigured into something beautiful
- This LOVE that allures us suggests that we unleash the powers of our imaginations
- Imagining whole new ways of being
- So, over the years I have experienced a series of transfigurations that have opened me to new ways of relating to the ONE who is BEYOND THE BEYOND AND BEYOND THAT ALSO
- As I was thinking about all these transfigurations, it occurred to me that the very first sermon that I ever preached here at Holy Cross happened on Transfiguration Sunday some 20 years ago
- I was preaching for call
- That's where a potential pastor auditions for a congregation
- In that very first sermon I told you a story about the time I climbed the Ober Glacier across from the Iger in Switzerland
- I read that old sermon the other day, and I couldn't help thinking about how far we have travelled together these past 20 years
- Holy Cross is certainly not the same congregation that I auditioned for all those years ago
- I am certainly not the same person that I was all those years ago
- We have been through more transfigurations than most congregations
- Back then we were a Mission Congregation – most of Holy Cross's expenses were covered by grants from the Eastern Synod
- Back then we followed all the suggestions that the church growth experts recommended so that we might grow up in to a big congregation and there were even dreams of building a bigger building
- We had more members back then
- After five years in this building, we managed to wean ourselves off of support from the Eastern Synod

- It took some doing but we entered the fray and spent years working to change the policies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
- We struggled long and we worked hard, we took amazing risks
- We provided a place for Lionel to complete his internship and when the time was right we ordained him
- Together we celebrated when after the efforts of so many people we managed to change the policies of the ELCIC
- We helped to transfigure the ELCIC into a fully inclusive church
- We began an adult education class that asked some transfiguring questions of our theology
- We sold our parsonage and invested the money in a speaker series
- We courageously took on Team ministry and for almost 5 years Pastor Tom worked with us to transfigure our presence in the community
- We have welcomed the homeless and we have been changed by them
- We have bitten off more than we could chew and we have had to step back and regroup
- Some of us dreamt of a ramp to get into this place, while others of us dreamed bigger than a ramp and transformed this building in to an accessible place
- We have dreamed dreams and we have taken risks, and we have had more than a few failures
- All along the way we have been nourished by our traditions even as we have been stretched by our questions
- we have transformed ourselves into a community that is Progressive in approach: Christlike in action.

- The power of the LOVE that continues to allure us, still tempts us toward visions of what might be if we allowed ourselves to be transfigured into something beautiful.
- As Anne and I were talking yesterday about how to open up conversations at our Annual Meeting, it occurred to me that we might begin by reflecting upon all the things that we love about this congregation of ours
- I'm sure that there are different things that each of us value about this congregation

- Make a list
 - What do you value the most about this congregation?
 - I said before that this indescribable LOVE in which we live and move and have our being allures us, tempts us to unleash the powers of our imaginations
 - So how about we dream some dreams
 - Let's use the power of our imaginations to dream some dreams
 - In your dreams, what beautiful thing will Holy Cross be transfigured into?
 - I suppose that it is only fair that I tell you what I value most about Holy Cross
- I value this Holy Cross because over and over again in the midst of the people of this congregation I have experienced the Sacred, the Holy ONE, the DIVINE
- Here I have found what the mystics call: a thin place
 - A place where there is no difference, now distance, between the everyday and the sacred
 - Here in the midst of you, my beloved I have experienced, over and over again the LOVE that is the HOLY ONE
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- when we experience G-o-d or The Sacred something like a creative transforming power is released into our lives.
- And we are transformed into something more beautiful
 - May the LOVE that is God allure us, transfigure us into something even more beautiful
 - May the LOVE that allures us, work in, with, through and beyond us so that together we can be LOVE in the world!

During the prayers of the people: the things we value most about Holy Cross were included as those things for which we give thanks and the beautiful things that Holy Cross will be transfigured into where head up as our visions of something more beautiful.