

# The Transfiguration

Fr. Bruce Swift, O.S.B.

Around 20 years ago, I visited here and was invited to give the homily. I began with an episode from Peanuts.

I have about twenty Peanuts comic books. In one of them, Charlie Brown and Lucy are leaning against a brick wall. Lucy says to Charlie, "Tell me something. Are there more bad people in the world or are there more good people". Charlie looks at her and says, "Who is to say? Who is to say who is bad or who is good?" Without hesitation, Lucy holds her hand up and emphatically says, "I will."

If you have ever been a fan of Peanut cartoons, you will recognize that Lucy is always ready with an answer, always ready to give an explanation, always ready to say something. This sounds like Peter in today's gospel. Jesus took Peter, James and John with him to the top of the Mountain. Jesus became transfigured and Peter began talking. "It is good for us to be here." He was still talking, when a voice boomed from the clouds and they all were scared and fell prostrate. I wonder if this voice did not boom out of the clouds as God's way of saying, "You are babbling again Peter. Why don't you be still and listen?"

I have heard Peter variously described as a loud mouth, obstinate, arrogant, always putting his foot in his mouth, not a rock to build a church on, but a sand pile that crumbled when tested.

Remember when the apostles were on the sea when a storm came up. As Jesus walked out to the boat, they became frightened. Peter asked to walk to the Lord if it were truly Jesus. He was invited in and he jumped in, but he very quickly lost faith and began to sink.

Remember the scene in the courtyard. Peter had just declared his steadfastness, greater than all the others had. "I will go to the cross and die with you before I will deny you." We know what happened.

Did Peter mean that he would go to the cross and die with Jesus? There is no doubt in my mind that he did. I see two problems. One: He spoke in an intellectual realm. It did not come from the heart. Second: I think he thought he could do all of those things on his own power. He was a strong man and did not need Jesus' help. It took him a long time and many failures to realize he was weak without Jesus. Without Jesus, he could not even catch fish.

However, he did learn. Peter's story is our story? a pledge of loyalty followed by betrayal; boasting followed by humiliating failure; impetuosity followed by indecisiveness.

It is consoling to know that God never gave up on him. He left him as head of his church even though he once denied knowing Him. It is consoling to know that God will not give up on us in our stumbling efforts.

Christ gave Peter, James and John a glimpse of heaven in the Transfiguration. I think we have all had our personal glimpses. I recall my grandmother saying-"all this and heaven too." We, like Peter, would probably like to stay there forever. However, we, like Peter have a great deal to learn before we are ready for the kingdom of heaven. We believe a great deal intellectually, but putting it into practice is a different story. How many times do we like Peter fumble and stumble from time to time because we have become self reliant, because we think we can solve everything on our own power. We must die to self, and then we will be ready, like Peter to follow Him to the cross. It is on the other side of the cross that there is a resurrection.

August 6, 2009