

## **Homily for the Transfiguration of the Lord**

This past Sunday evening at our gathering of Fusion (high school youth ministry), I got to lead the topic and discussion, which happened to be on the priesthood and the consecrated, religious life. The week before, the leaders of that event, thought it would be a good idea to have a Q and A with the teens, and let them write questions that they'd like answers to. I thought that was a great idea. "So, why reinvent the wheel", I thought? Honestly, I was surprised (in a good way) how many questions the teens had for me. Some of them were tough, like: "Did you ever question God?" Others were just fun, like: "Which do you prefer for Tuesday dinner, tacos or pizza rolls?" And a couple of them really made me reflect, like: "When did you first think of becoming a priest?"

Now usually when I get that last question, I tell people it wasn't until I was a junior in college that I really even entertained the idea of becoming a priest. However, my parents will tell you that when I was younger, I would go around giving "communion" in the form of Vanilla Wafers to my family!

It's amazing for me to think about the changes in my life that have taken place from the time I was a child with Vanilla Wafers to now 10 years as a priest of Jesus Christ. I think about growing up here at St. Peter's – assisting as an altar server, being part of the youth group, receiving my sacraments – and all that has taken place in the many years since.

You know – and I know this isn't a news flash – but, life is full of changes – some good, others bad, many neutral. As Blessed John Newman has said: “To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” They would tell us that frequently in the seminary, and I really liked it! Change is an integral part of lives. It's how we go from childhood to adulthood; from summer into fall; and from having hair to not!

Or, just look at the feast we celebrate today, the Transfiguration – a words which means literally, “to change form”. And, in fact, in our Gospel passage we hear how Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth, changes form before Peter, James, and John – with His face shining like the sun and His clothes becoming white as light. But, how are we to take this event? What are we to make of it? Well, up until that moment, Jesus' glory was hidden under His humanity; it was veiled by His human flesh. But at that miraculous moment of the Transfiguration, everything changed – and we see Jesus' in all His splendor and glory as the only-begotten Son of God.

Or, since we're using big fancy words, take the miraculous change which takes place at every Mass when the ordinary bread and wine become the very Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. We call that “transubstantiation”. In the Eucharist, Jesus' very Body is hidden under the symbol of bread, and His actual Blood is hidden under the symbol of wine. And how does this happen? By a “change of substance” – that's what transubstantiation means. The bread and wine truly, really, actually, definitively become His very Body and Blood.

But, you know, spiritual change isn't just reserved for Jesus, so we can see His glory revealed on a mountain, or for the Eucharist, so that Jesus can give us His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. It's also for us too. In fact, spiritual change is the only way we grow in holiness and gradually become more and more like Jesus. We are not born saints; we're born sinners. And through the grace of God, beginning in baptism, and then stretching through our lifetimes, God wants to shape us and mold us so we can become like our older brother, Jesus.

Isn't that wonderful news?! Our past is not our present. The baggage, the wounds, the mistakes, and the disappointments from yesterday, last year, or when we were children does not have to dictate our future. Jesus shows us that with grace, change is possible. And how does this happen? By sweeping the past under the rug? By just forgetting about it all? By keeping as busy, distracted, or entertained as possible? Nope. It's only by giving to Jesus our broken past – each and every time it tries to rear its ugly head – that can He take it from us, and give us grace in place of pain, fear, hurt, or doubt.

Our God is a God of miracles. If He can change water into wine at Cana of Galilee; and, if He can change wine into His Blood at the Last Supper, He can certainly change us by His grace to become the very men and women He has called us to be. God has destined for us to be saints – to be holy. And the degree that we allow Him to change us is the degree we shall be like Him and know the peace, love, joy, mercy, and peace that He alone is. God bless you.