

I speak to you in the name of God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.
Please be seated.

This morning we celebrate the mystery of the transfiguration. The Gospel of Luke tells us that Peter, James, and John shared in this very extraordinary event when these three disciples knew, without any question, that they were in the presence of God himself, as revealed through the appearance of Christ. Throughout our readings, we are reminded that the experiencing of God's presence can be both frightening and life-giving. And as we approach the season of Lent, we are also reminded that God's presence can be known to us in our own lives in this century if we remain open and attentive to that possibility.

The Gospel of Luke is one that will figure prominently for us this Lent. The New Oxford Annotated Bible tells us that the focus of this Gospel is on Christ as *God's anointed, or messiah, and the one who best envisions and interprets God's plan for God's people. Jesus is presented as a great teacher of Israel like Moses for the present day. Jesus speaks with wisdom and authority reminiscent of Moses...* Throughout this Gospel, Jesus is the embodiment of God's greatest revelation. As the late theologian Hanna Kassis wrote in 2001, *...Christianity, as I see it, is not based on a revealed Law, nor is the revelation of Christianity a written word. Rather, the revealed Word appears in human form. And the moment that marks and identifies Christian revelation is strung between the word spoken to the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation and the word spoken by Mary Magdalen declaring that Jesus was risen and asking her to proclaim that reality. These are moments that transformed history. It is neither the beauty of nature nor the historic symbolism that defines Christian revelation. The Christian revelation transcends nature, law, and history without repudiating them.*

The words *reveal* and *revelation* figure prominently in the English translations of both the New and Old Testaments. The Latin origins of these words

mean to *unveil, uncover, to lay bare*. But when we apply that to God, there is a much more magnificent meaning. Edith Humphrey, theologian and New Testament scholar, tells us this: *Revelation means, first of all, that our understanding of God and relationship with him spring initially from God himself. Revelation is not simply information about God's intentions for humanity and the world. In using the word "revelation", we acknowledge God's initiating love, action, word and vision of reality imparted to use. It means a certain unveiling of God's being, a willing divine vulnerability so we can know and be known...The first revelation to humanity begins with creation itself, and especially with the creation of humankind in the image of God, "inbreathed" by his Spirit...Revelation is initiated by a personal God and is given through persons...Sometimes God's self-disclosure comes in propositions; sometimes in visions; sometimes in (prophetically interpreted actions); sometimes in silence...Because of God's holy and mysterious character, we know that words do not tell us all there is to know; yet they are nonetheless indispensable for faithful communication within the believing community, and outside as well.*

When we further consider the business of revelation, Canadian theologian, Dr. David Reed of the Diocese of Toronto, tells us that...*God initiates revelation; humans respond. God's supreme revelation is Jesus the Christ...The initiative for knowing God lies with God. Humans receive knowledge of God; they do not achieve it.* Reed's words reinforce for us, as Christians, that our role is not to reveal or to definitively explain divine mystery, but to help to facilitate opportunities for people – including ourselves - to encounter God and to respond his self-revelation. It is a 2-part process – encounter and response. Thus, it may be that encounters with other parishioners across ACPC, with our communities, or with creation may hold opportunities for us to consider how God is revealed in our lives and through our various ministries, because it is often through our ministries

that we respond to God's self-revelation. That may seem obvious. But sometimes, particularly in the busyness of life, it is worth reminding ourselves that we, too, are nourished and strengthened by responding to the presence of God.

When we specifically consider the Gospel passage from Luke this morning and this idea of revelation, we have to marvel at the mystery that took place on the mountain when Jesus suddenly appeared as this dazzling figure and then the voice of God is heard: "This is my Son, my chosen. Listen to him." We can imagine how terrifying and how amazing that moment would have been for Peter, James, and John. And we have to remember that this was a desert land, dusty and hot. In the days before washing machines and Tide detergent and so forth, nothing would have been dazzling white. And so, the contrast between Christ's appearance as he climbed the mountain and what the disciples saw would have been extraordinary. But we are left with a question about this moment of revelation from God. Did Jesus actually change in that moment, or did God simply open the eyes of the disciples so that they could really see Jesus as he actually was – all of the time? Theologian Helmut Thielicke suggests to us that it was the second option – that God chose to reveal himself and to reveal the true Christ in that moment when he opened the eyes of Peter, James, and John. If we think about it for a moment, that makes sense. Jesus came to live among us in human form. Scripture tells us that he was fully human, but also fully divine. But it was that divine nature that needed to be revealed over time if his ministry was to have any impact. The people needed to discover and understand for themselves that this was the Son of God. That's why Jesus told the three men after that moment of revelation to tell no one about what they had seen.

I think there are some interesting parallels that we can draw from this Gospel when we consider where we are at in this moment as the Anglican Churches of Pictou County. What is it that God will reveal to us about our way forward if we

are open to experiencing that? What is it that God will reveal to us about each other if we take the time to be together, to learn together, and to pray together? Lent, of course, is the season for reflection, for prayer, for taking a deeper look into our lives and to try to draw some insights into how we might find ways to strengthen our common bonds and to grow in our faith – both individually and collectively. It is important to remember that it is God who reveals; our role is to respond.

Theologian Edith Humphrey tells us that revelation *means a certain unveiling of God's being, a willing divine vulnerability so that we can know and be known*. As with human sharing of one's self, one's identity, one's history, one's hopes and dreams, there is a vulnerability to God when he reveals himself to us. There is risk that the revelation may be missed, may be misunderstood, or may be ignored. This is where the business of response becomes so critically important in our relationships with God. Imagine sharing a deeply personal insight about oneself with another, only to have that moment of sharing being left unacknowledged or simply ignored. This is perhaps one of the most important reasons why, as Christians, we take the Lenten season to allow ourselves both space and grace to sometimes rest in the mysteries of our faith. We need to be sure that we are caring sufficiently for our own spiritual wellbeing and growth so that we can be sensitive and open to God revealing his will for our ministries and our lives to us. Amen.