

Live as children of *light.*

Ephesians 5:8

The Transfiguration

What is a religious experience? Sometimes when people go on retreats they come back on a “spiritual high.” Whatever happened to them at the retreat made them feel really close to God. Others feel really close to God when they are out in nature and see a beautiful sunset or have an unexpected encounter with one of God’s creatures. For me it’s the ocean or Lake Michigan (my version of the ocean!). I always feel at peace when I’m near the water. When I asked Michele, one of my co-workers at the parish office, “What is a religious experience?” she shared with me her story of a mountaintop experience.

“It happened several years ago when I was thinking about my mom. She died when I was 13 and I was missing her and feeling the memories of her slipping away. In my prayers, I asked God many questions: Is she watching over me? Is she proud of the person I am? Am I like her? That night I had a dream whereby my mom was rocking me like a baby only it was my adult body, back and forth, back and forth. I became aware of the dream and held on tight to the most beautiful moment, wanting it to last forever. In the morning I was filled with overwhelming gratitude for the gift of such an awesome experience, and I touched my heart and said, ‘Thank you God.’ If I never have another mountaintop experience, this is enough. I can call on it and experience it over and over again for the rest of my life.”

Her story seems similar to what the disciples experienced. They were up on a mountain – a place where God often revealed himself to people. They saw Jesus in His glory – talk about a religious experience! The disciples wanted to build tents but Jesus said no. So that moment couldn’t last forever. But I can imagine that the disciples never forgot that experience, no matter how fleeting it was. I wonder how they were different when they went back home. Perhaps it gave them the courage to continue on the journey to the cross with Jesus. Maybe they remembered that experience on the road to Emmaus when they met the stranger and knew him in the breaking of the bread. How could you not be different after you saw Jesus transfigured before your very eyes?

What can we learn from this reading? Well, I doubt if we will experience anything like the disciples did. But as people of faith we trust in something unseen. We don’t always understand our experiences. We wrestle with our God on various topics. But every once in a while, if we’re alert, God gives us an ‘aha’ moment that affirms our faith in Him. A moment when we feel really close to God and know that he exists. Maybe the lesson of the transfiguration is that we have to be alert for those fleeting moments where God shows His love for us or He confirms something that we already knew. He lets us know that He has a plan and He’s there for us.

Watch for the next time you have a ‘religious experience’ and then come back and tell the rest of us about it!

-Mary Robertson, Director of Liturgy and Music, Three Holy Women and Our Lady of Divine Providence

1. Have you ever had a ‘religious experience’ of God? Write about it.
2. In your prayer time, think about when you felt closest to God and perhaps at an unexpected moment God revealed himself to you. What did that feel like?
3. How can that experience help you in those times when you feel far away from God and your faith is tested?

Stations of the Cross – Milwaukee Focus – Saturday, March 18, 1:30-4:00pm

The stations of the cross are a wonderful way to pray during Lent (and throughout the year), walking the path that Christ walked on the day of his crucifixion, joining with him and his followers on what was surely a treacherous and painful journey to the cross. We have the opportunity to be more intentionally present with his suffering and – perhaps – connect our journey and suffering to his.

As Christians, we are called to be present with those on the margins, to love our neighbors and to engage with our community, a community of people who – like us – are each and every one created in the image and likeness of God and are our brothers and sisters.

On Saturday, March 18, our family of parishes will join these two ideas into one powerful experience. Our city has many powerful places – some because of the painful memories they evoke and some because of the wonderful work that is happening in them. Starting at 1:30pm, we will depart from Three Holy Women-Holy Rosary Church (2011 N Oakland Ave) and journey together on a Milwaukee-centered Stations of the Cross. We'll travel by bus to several locations around the city that embody the spirit of each of the stations: praying, reflecting and discussing as we go. Here are a few places we will visit:

- St. Ben's Community Meal
- Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. memorial statue
- Catholic Charities Immigration Services
- Joy House Women's Shelter
- Memorial of Joshua Glover
- Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility
- Pathfinders Emergency Youth Center
- Sojourners Family Peace Center

Check out this website - <https://tinyurl.com/MilwaukeeStations2017> - for more information and to sign up. Sign up is not required, but it is much appreciated so we know how many buses to order. All are welcome, whether you are a parishioner or not, which makes this a great event to invite your friends to join you. Youth are also welcome, but please note that the material may be a bit too intense for children under the age of 14.

Contact Andrew Musgrave for more information, to ask questions, or if you'd prefer to sign up over the phone: 414.271.6577 or musgravea@archmil.org.

