



**Last Sunday after the Epiphany (A)**  
**February 26, 2017**  
*The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector*

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

Two Sunday's ago. I preached for the final time at Saint Peter's Episcopal Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We celebrated our life together as Rector and Parish in the presence of God, a Bishop from the Diocese and so many others. It was a humbling experience as I looked out and saw representatives from various aspects of my life and ministry over the past several years. They included the Mayor and other officials of the City of Cambridge, sisters and brothers from the South Asian Center of Cambridge, my brother, Imam Ismael, from the Cambridge mosque, the director of the Central Square Theater of Cambridge, representatives from one of the three shelters Saint Peter's now supports, priests from the Diocese and parishioners, even those parishioners who usually celebrate the great high holy days of Christmas and Easter.

I claimed the time as "a paradoxical time for me, a time of joy and a time of sadness, a time of anticipation and a time of farewell." I jokingly claimed it as somewhat Dickenson. I said it was "an uncomfortable time and a time in which the paradox of saying "hello" to a new ministry meant saying "farewell" to ministry for me in that historic parish founded in 1842 and to involvement with the City of Cambridge.

I knew that change was afoot, a very big change, a change for me as a person, a priest and as a rector and a change for Saint Peter's, the Diocese of Massachusetts and the City of Cambridge. You see, I wore many hats. My leaving Cambridge to come and be with you here in Grand Rapids heralded a sea change of near epoch proportions for me, many people and organizations and dear friends. My acceptance to God's call to be here with you meant embracing significant change.

You have been about change. For nearly two years, you have been about embracing change and letting go of the past. You have hopefully been about a time of state of excitement and anticipation of what might be awaiting this historic and active parish for the future.

One of my favorite Scripture commentators said about today's Gospel, a passage we call "The Transfiguration", that it's really about 'change.' She stated, "Change by definition is a simultaneous holding on of what was and a looking forward with the hope of what can be... Change insists that one exists in a place one doesn't want to be. Change demands that one abides in a space of 'yet to be' resolution. Change [can] create a sense of grief over what was and yet excitement for what is to come." (Karoline Lewis, February 26, 2017. [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org))

Today's passage from Matthew's Gospel is a kind of summary of who Jesus and is in relationship to God, Moses, Elijah, Peter, James and John. It sets up a dynamic of change that will lead Jesus to the cross and beyond. It represented considerable change for Jesus, physical and spiritual, and change for the apostles and for a host of others.

For me, I can identify the passage as one of change for Jesus and others as well as identify the passage as a kind of bridge. I believe it is a bridge between the Sundays of Epiphany and the upcoming Season of Lent.

In the transfiguration of Jesus, the glory of Jesus is evident while pointing us to a vastly different season. Today, we begin movement the season of light and joy that is Epiphany to the season of introspection and self-examination which is part of the Season of Lent.

But wait, we are here today to celebrate the glory of Jesus! We are here to celebrate the life-changing invitation that is ours as followers of Jesus to be more and more like him. God invited Moses to "Come up to me on the mountain and wait there", so, too, are we invited to come, to be with Jesus and one another and to wait in joyful anticipation of what lies ahead.

Whenever we say "yes" to that invitation to a deeper relationship with Jesus, we say "yes" to an invitation to change, to become one with God and to embrace the many opportunities which await us. As followers of Jesus, we are his companions on the road to Calvary, to the Resurrection and beyond. Jesus is our companion on the road to what it means to be a compassionate and reconciling community of faith.

We have embarked on a journey together. We have embarked on a road of change. We have done that as a community of faith longing to be all we can be as followers of and companions with Jesus.

As a community of faith gathered in this House of God, you and I have embraced a call to be together in ministry. Through the mystery of God's presence in and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are here together this day and committed to be together in ministry for years to come.

I am not perfect and certainly not a miracle worker. I am not a Scripture scholar. I am not a great theologian. I am not many things. I am a human being called to continue my priestly ministry with you, the beloved people of God at St. Mark's. Together and I mean "together", we can and will do marvelous things.

Together, I pray we will embrace and trust one another as God's beloved community at St. Mark's. Together, we can be women, men and children moved by the Holy Spirit of God. Together, we can experience life that will be genuinely life-giving only if it is borne from the Spirit of God and not through human will.

As God's beloved community, we are called to be together in prayer and together in making a difference in our lives and the lives of all those around us. The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us and compels us to make the world a better place in which to live.

I am honored to be with you in this new call to discipleship, this new relationship to be together and united in faith. If I didn't believe it is a call to hear God's prophetic voice in our midst and to be attentive to that voice I wouldn't be here.

Today's letter from Peter tells us to be the "lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises". That lamp, that light, is to shine in our hearts and in the hearts of all our sisters and brothers no matter who they are, what they profess in life or how different they may appear to be.

My sisters and brothers, our world needs us. Our nation and this community in western Michigan need us.

Our prophetic voice as people committed to justice, equality, compassion, mercy and peace is needed perhaps like never before. Our voice needs to be the voice of Jesus. One with him in Word, Eucharist and one another, we can be catalysts of change, catalysts of transformation, new life for us and those lives we touch.

We are called to be witnesses, witnesses to truth, witnesses to the dignity of every human person. We are called to be prophetic witnesses of the one who came into our world as the light of the world. We are called as disciples of Jesus so that all God's people can experience the light of God's presence even in the darkest of times.

This Monday morning, a new day dawned in my life and in your life at St. Mark's. Indeed, I left Saint Peter's in Cambridge at 3:00 p.m. a week ago Friday and was here at St. Mark's last Monday morning. A bit of a break might have been helpful but God's work is my passion in life.

We may respond in different ways to our shared life as followers of Jesus. But through the grace of God, a new day has dawned. We have been given a fresh start. "Our mission, our call, is to go into the world as God's life-giving and healing presence wherever we find ourselves and in whatever we do" as the beloved and blessed people of God.

My sisters and brothers, Jesus tells us to not be afraid. We can do all things well in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. God's grace is ours, and for that grace, we are forever grateful. Amen.