*“Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.”* Today we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration.

America as a country has always been fascinated by transformation. There is a reason why we have made multi-million dollar franchises out of Spiderman, Wonder Woman and Iron Man. There’s something fascinating about a regular human being who is really more than he or she appears to be.

The transfiguration of Jesus falls right into this category. Here we have a mild-mannered fisherman who travels around his native land “disguised” as a human being. Then one day: Shazaaam: he goes from mild-mannered Jesus to SuperGod,: we have the bright light and the company of other superheros—Elijah and Moses-- to prove it.

But Jesus wasn’t transformed, you say, he was TRANSFIGURED! Ahhh. But here’s the deal. Look both words up in a dictionary, and the definitions are the same.

**Transform: to change in form, appearance, or structure.**

**Transfigure: to change in outward form or appearance; transform.**

I read a book a couple of years ago called *Jesus Wars*, by Philip Jenkins. This history of the earliest church recounts stories of Bishops leading Christian factions to fight each other in bloody wars from the 300’s to the 600’s. These wars were fought over whether Jesus was fully human-- or fully divine, or both--and about what proportion of him was divine, and which was human. Unsatisfied to leave it a mystery, they tried to create certainty.

It wasn’t the part of Jesus that they could see that was the problem- they could see his humanness, his pain when suffering loss and torture, his love for his friends. They could see the divinity in him- in this transfiguration event, this metamorphosis. It was the part they couldn’t see that presented the problem. What was Jesus inside?

Was Jesus half and half? Half God-- half human? Was he a God who merely disguised himself as human? Was he a human that realized his divine potential? Was he fully human, and also fully divine? And if he was both—it evidently wasn’t enough to just say they weren’t exactly sure of how he was both human and divine—they had to define the ratio, and which part of him did what. People killed each other in brutal ways, trying to define the nature of Jesus: trying to define what was inside.

**But defining what is inside someone is difficult to do.**

They wanted Christ neat, and understandable. And if not understandable, at least defined so that they could determine who believed correctly, and who believed incorrectly. They not only wanted to put Christ in a box – they were determined to spell out which believers were RIGHT and who were WRONG.

Something happened to Jesus on that mountain that proved to the disciples that he was so much more than they had understood, or even imagined. It was so powerful an experience that Peter wanted to preserve his mountaintop experience, he wanted to shelter it from the outside world, to be able to go back to it, and experience it again.

**But God said it wasn’t to be. You can’t box up a transforming vision.**

Peter was to spend the rest of his life proclaiming Jesus as the Christ, the anointed one, God and human. He was to wrestle with how to explain it: how could he make it make sense to people? And while he was proclaiming this vision of Jesus, this experience of Jesus, and sharing this overwhelming love of Jesus, *it transformed him.*

**And we are fascinated by transformation.**

We should be, because we all transform. It is said that the cells in our bodies completely replace themselves with new cells every 7 to 10 years. That is a simplification, but mostly true— most of our cells do replace themselves with varying rates of change.. One might say we are completely different people now than we were when we were 20 years ago.

And we would be right- in a sense. My physical being has completely transformed—many times over. **But what about the Lisa inside?**

Sometimes I think that we are too impressed by physical transformation. We watch TV shows to cheer on people who have lost 150 lbs., we love makeovers—and it doesn’t even have to be makeovers of people—we love makeovers of homes, too. And some of us, come on—admit it with me—some people even contemplate having surgery so they can transform themselves into an earlier physical version of themselves.

We can become so enamored with the outward shell that we forget that that most important transformation happens where we can’t see it: INSIDE.

The Bishops were right—it’s what we can’t see in Jesus—it’s what we can’t see in *ourselves*-- that defines us.

**What are we becoming on the inside?**

Are we keeping our mountaintop experiences tame and boxed up, wanting to experience them in the same way again and again-- or are we letting them out of the box—and letting them transform us all the way through?

God told us that Christ cannot be kept in a box. Wonder cannot be kept in a box. Love cannot be kept in a box. They can only be shared.

Overwhelming love transforms us. It makes us believe we can do anything, be anything--it makes us want to share the love, it makes us want to ***become*** that love. It changes us from the inside out. It transfigures us.

Each of our mountaintops will be different. We will each meet Christ in different ways, and we will each transform differently. And nobody will be able to define what happens to us inside. But they will be able see what we become. Amen.