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ARCHIVES

HOMILETICS

Trinity 10

TRANSFIGURATION

Standard	Ordo A
Jeremiah 7:1-7	Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14
1 Corinthians 12:1-11	2 Peter 1:16-19
Luke 19:41-48	Matthew 17:1-9

Ordo A directs the church to celebrate the Lord's Transfiguration on Aug. 6, which has been a customary date for the remembrance of that event since 1547. Whenever that date occurs on a Sunday, it is perhaps good for Lutherans to shift their celebration of it — first, to break the monotony of the non-festive half of the church year that seems to pervade even the pious by Trinity X, and, second, to view the Transfiguration from some perspective different from the Epiphany themes.

In the standard lessons, the Old Testament lesson and the Gospel, are intimately related. Jesus echoes Jeremiah's stinging rebuke of hollow worship as He confronts the Jerusalem of His day, "the city that thought it had all of the answers when all it had was the problem." Its problem was that, demanding signs to validate Jesus' claims and credentials, it had failed to recognize in Him the promised Prophet, the Messianic Savior. The one who cried over the city necessarily became the one who died for it — and for all men.

And that's what Transfiguration points toward. For, as Matthew makes unmistakably clear, the Transfiguration is God's immediate response of approval to the mission of Jesus, that mission that leads Him to suffering, death, and resurrection. Those who follow Him must renounce themselves, take up their cross (17:24), and, while carrying it, listen to Him!

Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days and of the Son of Man set the props in place

for the apocalyptic scene in which the Transfiguration participates. The Epistle, sensibly shortened by two verses in Ordo A by comparison with the Epistle customarily used by Lutherans, uses the Transfiguration event as a foretaste of the Parousia of the one who is surely coming back. The writer's assertion is bold, for he intends to establish his credibility as a witness to Christianity.

Glory in the Transfiguration

I. An eye for glory.

A. The church doesn't seem to be winning many championships in the glory league these days. False senses of glory: Prestige. Popularity. Success.

B. The Lord of the church had the real eye for glory. His face was set steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. "He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son that the Son may glorify Thee. . . . And now, Father, glorify Thou Me in Thy own presence with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made.'" (John 17:1,5)

II. A taste for glory.

A. The Lord of the church undertook the glorious work. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work." (John 4:34)

In Luke it is reported that Moses and Elijah "spoke of His departure, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem" (9:31). It would not be easy. He must drain the cup of suffering to its dregs. However, "not My will but Thine be done."

B. The church — we — must develop a taste for His work. He showed the

way. Coming down from the mount, He healed the epileptic boy. Those we have with us. The poor we have with us. The work of redemption He finished. The work of sharing its new life with those who are but half alive remains for us to finish.

Trinity 11
NINETEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Standard	Ordo A
2 Samuel 22:21-29	1 Kings 19:9a,
1 Corinthians 15:1-10	11-13a
Luke 18:9-14	Romans 9:1-5
	Matthew 14:22-33

The standard lessons for this day are dominated by the Gospel, the familiar story of the Pharisee and the publican. The unconverted Pharisee of the Gospel, self-satisfied and proud of his own importance, is contrasted with the great converted Pharisee who wrote the Epistle: "I am the least of the apostles; in fact, since I persecuted the church of God, I hardly deserve the name apostle; but by God's grace that is what I am. . . ." (Jerusalem Bible tr.)

In Ordo A the Old Testament lesson narates the familiar episode of Elijah and the still, small voice. God was not to be found in power — wind, earthquake, fire — but in a gentle breeze.

The Epistle is the beginning of Paul's magnificent exposition of the place of Israel in God's plan of salvation. Some have considered chapters 9—11 to be the very heart of the Epistle to the Romans; the preceding chapters are a prolog to the heart of Paul's message in 9—11.

The Gospel narrates the story about Jesus' walking on the water, Peter's attempt to imitate the Lord, and the disciples' reaction.

Fear's Friend

- I. The winds come.
 - A. The force of the wind brings fear, and fear brings unfaith. We too

may sink. We go about our daily tasks. Then the headwinds come up. They knock us off course at least. They may collapse our frail bark. We are in danger of sinking — we begin to sink.

- B. Peter as disciple is Peter as paradigm. We are so much like him. It is not enough to have Him near. We want to walk on the water, too.

II. Our Lord comes.

- A. A terrifying experience. "It is a ghost" is bad enough. But this is the holy God, holy and righteous God! God does not desire the death of a sinner, but He states as simple fact that the sinner, the soul that sins, shall die.
- B. But it is *the Lord!* "It is I." It is "I am." We may not be able to explain why He permits blowing evil in our lives and in His world; but can we not believe that He has come into it to live it out with us? The presence of God — is that not reason enough to "take heart"?

III. The problems come.

- A. Let us be specific. Here they are: national, congregational, personal.
- B. But the only real problem is, "Why did you doubt?"

IV. The Answer has come.

- A. Acknowledge it: "Truly You are the Son of God."
- B. That's what was said at the cross!

Trinity 12
TWENTIETH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Standard	Ordo A
Isaiah 29:18-19	Isaiah 56:1, 6-7
2 Corinthians 3:4-11	Romans 11:13-15,
Mark 7:31-37	29-32
	Matthew 15:21-28

The standard lessons accent the kind of deliverance that God works because of His love for men. The Old Testament lesson says that the deaf will hear, the blind will see, the lowly will rejoice, the poorest will exult in the Holy One of Israel—all on that great day of Yahweh's visitation. The Epistle and the Collect approach the subject of ministry. The Epistle reminds us that we are ministers of God's new and permanent covenant. The Collect underscores our request for the gift of the Spirit, that we may minister faithfully by rendering "true and laudable service." Because He does all things well," we can respond by publishing and proclaiming His praise. Christ's revelation of the splendor of His glory enables *us* to do all things well in Him; ours is a ministry of deliverance!

The new Ordo A also focuses on the universality of God's grace by zeroing in on a healing miracle—the daughter of the Canaanite woman. The Old Testament lesson indicates that Yahweh welcomes converts from paganism—all people who cling to His covenant, serve Him, and love His name. The Epistle likewise accents God's mercy to all men, Jews and Gentiles. If the Gospel is to be proclaimed within this framework, it might well urge upon us the task which God clearly gave to His chosen people but which they all too often successfully ignored. They were to be a light to lighten the Gentiles. We too are to bring the Light to all with whom we come into contact. Ours is that kind of a ministry.

Grace for All—Grace from Us

- I. The Canaanite — epitome of the heathen.
 - A. She was plagued by a demon, for her daughter was possessed by a demon. There is little point in discussing the origin of evil, or how a gracious God can condemn those who have had less opportunity than we. The fact is that the devil has some in his control, and

others he plagues with the agonies that result.

- B. She cried out for mercy for herself although the demon persecuted her daughter. There are many cries for help that reach our ears. We ought to heed them in specific help for the immediate needs. But we ought always to be aware that the real enemy is the demon who denies to his victims the joy of being possessed by God.
- II. The Christians — representatives of the Christ.
 - A. We concede the mystery. Why did God concentrate on the Jews? How could Jesus Himself see His ministry as restricted to those chosen people? How vital it is that we recognize that the salvation which is of the Jews be preserved and shared in its power with all in the world.
 - B. We participate in the gracious action. The need of this woman overcame His own timetable. What would be for all the world when His death for all had been accomplished He offered to her here and now. And so we must—ever.
 - C. We do as He did—we work to solve the immediate problem, even while we remember the cause of it all.

Trinity 13

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Standard	Ordo A
Leviticus 18:1-5	Isaiah 22:19-23
Galatians 3:15-22	Romans 11:33-36
Luke 10:23-37	Matthew 16:13-20

The standard Gospel tells the story of the official from Capernaum who sought Jesus' healing for his own son who was ill. Without the props that "signs and wonders" could provide, his faith gripped Jesus' word of

promise firmly. Only such a faith in the powerful word of the One who shed His blood to redeem us can sustain us in life's perplexities and adversities.

Into this setting the Gospel of Ordo A finds a fitting place and supplies a strong support. Here Simon speaks for us all when he says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." It is the one answer to Christ's question which God deserves to hear.

God Might Well Ask

- I. He has done so very much for men.
 - A. All that is connected with Elijah, Jeremiah, the prophets, and John the Baptist.
 - B. All that is available for men through
 - the work of His Son Jesus Christ.
 - C. All that is continually being done by the Father's revelation to all the world through the Spirit and through the church.
- II. Is it too much to believe?
 - A. The question remains very pointed: "But who do you say I am?" It is not a question about what the Bible says; not a question about what others say. It is a question that confronts each one of us.
 - B. Forgiveness of sin is available to each one who will accept.
 - C. That is the way to blessedness.

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