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The Rev. Julie E. Calhoun-Bryant,
Priest-in-Charge

The Transfiguration of our Lord: Mother Julie's Sermon for August 5/6

August 6 marks two events that foreshadowed the changing of the world: The Transfiguration of our Lord on the holy mountain and the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The juxtaposition of these two events reminds me of a conversation I had in seminary about the naming of a nuclear submarine "Corpus Christi", the Body of Christ. While the sub was named after a city in Texas, we were deeply troubled by the use of the sacramental bread's name on an instrument of mass destruction.

On the holy mountain long ago, Jesus took Peter, James and John with him to witness a glimpse of what was to be. Jesus' face changed before them and his appearance was physically transfigured in their presence. They were allowed to see the glory of his very being. The three disciples also watched their master consult with Moses and Elijah, the two greatest servants of God in the history of Israel. Here's the thing though, the three misinterpreted why they were being permitted to witness these things. They were on the way to Jerusalem and this dazzling experience likely only heightened their dreams of glory in defeating the Roman occupation of Israel. It was not to be so. Jesus was discussing the upcoming events of Holy Week with Moses and Elijah, beginning with Palm Sunday and culminating in his arrest and crucifixion. Before the return to his former glory Jesus would suffer unspeakably. Only after Jesus' resurrection and ascension would the three disciples understand why they were witnesses to Jesus' transfiguration.

A very different kind of brief, dazzling brightness happened on August 6 in 1945. The power unleashed that day changed the world as the arms races was revealed and continued on in public. I don't need to enumerate the effects of the dropping of the bomb. The loss of human life and the terrible suffering that went on for years is well documented in the annals of history. When I was a girl we had nuclear bomb drills. The word nuclear wasn't used, of course, but as seventh graders we were old enough to know why we were doing this. We would stand in the hallway facing our lockers with our arms over our heads. I laughed inwardly at the absurdity of these drills. If a nuclear bomb was dropped on our school it wouldn't matter where we were in the building! The threat of the end of the world brought about by nuclear weapons was now the backdrop of American life. There would be no World War III; there would just be the end of the world. President Biden's reluctance to admit Ukraine to NATO is a part of this legacy. The United States doesn't want to declare war on Russia and risk the unleashing of nuclear power once again on the world.

Jesus' three disciples, his inner circle, wanted to use Jesus' power to lead them in war against the Romans and defeat them. President Truman and the advisers who supported his decision chose to use the atomic bomb's power to defeat the Japanese who had attacked us and brought us into the war. It's helpful in dealing with these choices of the use of power to defeat one's enemy to look again at the telling of the Transfiguration in Luke's Gospel. If we set aside for a moment the change in Jesus' appearance, we can focus on the conversation Jesus was having with Moses and Elijah - a conversation about what he was about to "accomplish" at Jerusalem. Jesus didn't go to Jerusalem to die. The Son of God went to accomplish the salvation of the world. In so doing Jesus pointed to the way in which God intended us to use power.

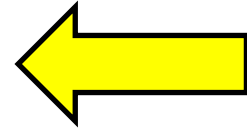
A caveat here. I'm not intending to discuss the morality of war. This is not an anti-military sermon. My teenage uncle was killed by the Nazis and my grandfather fled in the night to escape arrest. A year later my mother, at the tender age of 16, was able to escape and join him in the refugee camp. I am eternally grateful to the United States armed forces and to those of the other Allied nations for their defeat of Hitler and Nazi Germany. The issue of the morality of war is a lifelong struggle for me. However, we follow Jesus, who instructed us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Jesus did not use his power to declare war on the Romans. Instead he allowed them to torture and kill him as they had countless others before. Jesus died so that we might live. The life he offers is one of joy, hope, kindness, gentleness, patience, and, above all, love.

Jesus' love was proactive and informed by constant prayer. He healed the sick, raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, engaged with the outcast, and sought the lost. Jesus also called out hypocrisy among the leaders, spoke truth to power, and called us all to repentance. On August 6 and 9 of 1945 God watched as we killed tens of thousands of civilians. Let the Feast of the Transfiguration be a day of repentance of the tragic use of destructive power by a fallen humanity, a time when we wrestle with the morality of waging war. Let's also ponder Jesus' conversation with Moses and Elijah about what he was to accomplish, his obedience to God, and his trust in God's power to bring about the salvation of the world through the sacrifice of his life. Amen.

A Note from Mother Julie

I began writing a weekly letter during the pandemic as a means of keeping the people of St. Alban's in connection with their church. I continued this practice and included the people of Emmanuel when I became their priest. However, the time that it takes to write the letter can be put to better use now that life has normalized. I'm spending too much time at my desk. Therefore, I'm going to continue to write out my sermons and include them in place of a letter most weeks.

Emmanuel Members Please Note!



August 12: We will gather at the home of Pamela Trendell

212 Edgerton Street
Minoa, NY 13116

4:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist

5:30 p.m. BBQ - meat is provided, please bring a side dish or dessert

Second Thursday is August 10

Join us at St. Alban's for dinner at 6:00 and the service of Healing and Holy Eucharist at 7:00 p.m.

The service will also be on Zoom.

Codes: 836 0660 6389 and 371096



St. Alban's Vestry meets
Tuesday, August 15 at 6:30 p.m.
on Zoom

Emmanuel Vestry meets
Wednesday, August 16 at 3:15 p.m.
at the church

In Person Schedule: Both Parishes & Friends are Welcome!

Saturday	Pamela Trendell's Home	* 4:30 p.m.: Holy Eucharist 5:30 p.m.: BBQ
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Sunday	St. Alban's	* 9:30 a.m.: Holy Eucharist 10:30 a.m.: Coffee Hour
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* also on Zoom

Zoom Schedule & Codes

Saturday

5:00 p.m. Emmanuel: 812 9701 3112 & 381729

Sunday

9:30 a.m. St. Alban's: 826 9515 6305 & 446765

Tuesday

10:00 a.m. Morning Prayer: 817 4372 7305 & 891158