

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Since Rory has finished his assignment, it is now back to me to write the bulletin articles. I hope that having a difference voice has been a nice reprieve, as well as a good learning experience for him.

We celebrate the Transfiguration of the Lord this weekend. As Peter, James and John are overwhelmed by the vision of Moses, Elijah and the glorified Jesus, a bright cloud comes and casts a shadow over them. This bright cloud is understood to be the “Glory Shekinah” cloud of the presence of God. This is the cloud that led the Israelites through the desert, and that filled Solomon’s Temple. It was a sign of the presence of God come down to touch the earth. This cloud shows the presence of God here on the mountain, and from it, the voice speaks:

This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him. (Matthew 17:5)

Jesus and the three apostles hear this voice. For the apostles, it is there to help the deal with the scandal of the Cross (in Luke’s account of the Transfiguration, he specifically mentions that Moses and Elijah are speaking with Jesus about how He will go to the Cross in Jerusalem). For Jesus, the voice is there to strengthen Him in His resolve to go to the Cross.

If you remember, there was another time when the voice spoke from the heavens to Jesus – at His baptism. Right before Jesus went to the desert to be tempted, He was strengthened by the voice which told Him then also that He was the Beloved Son (see Matthew 3:17). It is interesting to note that Jesus is strengthened for adversity by a reminder of *who He is*, a reminder of His *identity*.

Take this example: if a child is enjoying himself in a toy store, and, after having focused on a particular toy for a while, realizes that his mother is no longer with him, he, understandably, will become very much distressed! He will go searching for his mother, crying out to her, until he finally finds her. None of the toys in the store will have any temptation for him until he finds his mother. This is not because he is some kind of moral giant, but because *he wants his Mama* more than anything else!

With Jesus, He was able to overcome all temptation, including the struggle with the Cross, because *He knew who He was* in relationship with the Father. He is the Father’s Beloved Son, and this relationship was the most important thing in His life. He knew what He had to do because He knew who He was.

This is important for us, too. Each of us, by our baptism, is a beloved daughter or son of God. In fact, I would dare to say that you – yes, *you* – are God’s favorite daughter or favorite son. When we realize this, we remember that God has our back, that every situation – really, *every situation* – in which we find ourselves, is in the Hands of God. We realize who we are and so how we are supposed to live. The lure of temptation will have less and less hold on us as we come to embrace our true identity as children of God, not because we are moral giants, but because we will have fallen in love, and want to be with our Father more than we will want the sinful things of this world.

THE PROBLEM IS THAT WE FORGET.

We are told over and over who we are, we are told that we are loved by God, yet we forget. When we forget who we are, when we forget that God is the real fulfillment of all our desires, then we can be lured by sin. The things of this world seem to fill our emptiness, and so we look to them. But we are left emptier and emptier, and we, like addicts, keep going back for more and more. And we will destroy ourselves... unless there comes that moment again of *remembering who we are as God’s most-beloved children!*

May we hear the words of the Father today, “*You are my beloved son, my beloved daughter*” and may we allow the knowledge of who we are fill the emptiness we have, and so fulfill every one of our desires. May this knowledge strengthen us through our struggles, and give us courage to follow God.