**TRANSFIGURED INTO BELOVED COMMUNITY: A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP KEVIN**

Hurricane Isaias was roaring its way through the diocese. Here in the Lehigh Valley, a storm was raging. The dogs demanded breakfast in bed, or under the bed in Annie’s case. And I know that feeling of terror. You may know it as well. When your only instinct is to take cover, to retreat or shelter in place. That inconsolable feeling of terror.

Life at its harshest is like that. Some of you may even be going through it during this COVID moment. And I come to you today on the Feast of the Transfiguration. Tradition names Mount Tabor as the site of this momentous revelation. On that mount, the disciples received a momentous glimpse of Jesus’ divinity—a much needed, hopeful glimpse of God’s presence in advance of the events to come—namely Jesus own suffering and death.

The disciples’ hearts were awakened and they wanted to capture the moment—to build tents. But there was no staying put or capturing this moment. Jesus own imminent suffering demanded they return to the harsh realities of the valley below.

This day gives us the opportunity to pause and to name those Transfiguration moments in our own life. For me, it is this unlikely current moment—in the moral outrage that followed the horrific murder of George Floyd. This is my Transfiguration moment that I am holding onto. It is this collective justice-seeking soul moment, birthed out of suffering, that I hold onto.

And there have been glimpses—when NASCAR bans confederate flags, and words like “white supremacy” and “white privilege” are spoken at the dinner table, when the courageous witness of long-suffering servants like John Lewis finally receive their due—it feels like a Transfiguration moment.

This moment is so astounding that one even dares to imagine the dismantling of systemic racism and criminal justice reform. And yet, what makes it a transfiguration moment, I believe, is that *action* followed our hearts being awakened.

Let me offer one point about the text. We hear from the gospel of Luke, “the appearance of Jesus face changed and his clothes became dazzling white.” But let me be clear. It was only his clothing that was dazzling white. Historically speaking, his face may have begun to *glow*, but it remained brown. *Brown*. There wasn’t a white person, a single person who looked like me, on Mt. Tabor that day. And they were God’s beloved.

As we seek prayerful respite with Jesus, let us be comforted like the disciples on Mount Tabor and emboldened by Jesus’ charge to get back down the mountain and bring God’s justice and love to the suffering of the beloved community that waits and needs us most.

Who needs us in the midst of this pandemic storm? Who needs our love? Who needs our compassion most desperately? Beloved, mark the first week in September on your calendars. We will be gathering once again in our new Convocations to discuss resolutions in advance of October’s virtual—yes, of course, virtual—Diocesan Convention.

These pre-Convention gatherings will be yet another opportunity for us to reconnect, to
grow more deeply in relationship, and to discover our shared priorities as we build something we cannot see or know. I look forward to this important time together.

Know of my gratitude. Know of my love. Stay strong. And remember that the only way forward is together.