

Canadian singer/songwriter Bruce Cockburn penned the following lyrics in his song, *Child of the Wind*:

*Little round planet in a big universe:
sometimes it looks blessed, sometimes it looks cursed.
Depends on what you look at, obviously,
but even more it depends on the way that you see.*

The way that we see the world matters. Our worldview matters. Some see the world as a battleground between us and them, the haves and the have-nots, the fit and the unfit, or the good guys and the bad guys. What matters, according to this worldview, is making sure that our side wins and the other side loses.

Some see the world as a meaningless conglomeration of matter and energy that is ultimately indifferent to the needs and wants of individual human beings. What matters, according to this worldview, is imposing our will and our ingenuity onto the chaos and forcing it to satisfy our desires.

The Christian worldview does not see the world in either of these ways. As Christians, we follow the guidance of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who teaches that our Father in heaven “makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45). Later on, Jesus says, “Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them” (6:26) and, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these” (28-29).

Jesus sees the universe as a good place that is constantly being created and cared for by God. According to the creation stories in the book of Genesis, which Jesus grew up reading, God created a wonderfully good universe, formed humankind in the divine image, and placed us in the world in order to help care for this beautiful place. Anyone who has read the account of the life and teachings of Jesus in the gospels knows that Jesus is not blind or indifferent to the complicated realities of conflict and suffering, but he regards all of that as secondary to the central truth of a good God who created a good world and continues to sustain it in love.

The fourteenth century English mystic, Julian of Norwich, was the first woman to write a book in English. While lying sick in bed and near death, Julian describes her own experience of the kind of worldview that Jesus wanted to instill in his followers. Julian writes that God

“showed me something small, no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, and I perceived that it was as round as any ball. I looked at it and thought: What can this be? And I was given this general answer: It is everything which is made. I was amazed that it could last, for I thought that it was so little that it could suddenly fall into nothing. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and always will, because God loves it; and thus everything has being through the love of God” (Showings, IV).

The way that Julian and Jesus see the world is very different from the way that nationalists, terrorists, and other fanatics see the world. For Julian and Jesus, there is no struggle between us and them, no cosmic indifference to suffering, because there is only the God whose name is Love.

In today’s gospel, we get to see the beginning of the Christian worldview taking root in the minds of Jesus’ disciples, Ss. Peter, James, and John. We read that Jesus takes these three friends up a mountain and there, far away from the bustling crowds, “he was transfigured before them” (Mark 9:2). The text of Mark’s gospel only describes the change in his clothes, which “became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them” (3). While this might sound like the beginning of a commercial for laundry detergent, no sales pitch was forthcoming. The gospel writers preserved this story in order to express the way they saw Jesus. For them, Jesus was more than just a good man or a wise teacher; he was full of divine radiance. In later centuries, the bishops of the Church would develop this experience into the doctrine we now know as the divinity of Christ. One of the things that makes Christianity unique among the religions of the world is that we find God in a person. In Judaism and Islam, Moses and Muhammad are respected as prophets who proclaim the divine message, but in Christianity, Jesus Christ is the message itself. Through the story of the Transfiguration, we begin to see God in Jesus and, through Jesus, we begin to see God everywhere else.

Nowhere is this truth more apparent than in the mystery of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, we take grain and grapes that have been shaped into bread and wine. This means that, when our ushers present the elements at the altar, they are symbolically offering to God the fruits of the Earth and the genius of human labor.

Every wheat stalk and grapevine, every farm worker and truck driver, every hillside and highway are already present on the church's altar, even before the prayer of consecration has even begun. The Offertory in our liturgy is, not simply a moment for fundraising, but a giving back to God of everything that God has given to us.

Once the priest has received this offering, she blesses it and offers it back to us as the consecrated Body and Blood of Christ. Then we, the people of the Church, rise and gather around the altar to receive Christ. In that moment, it no longer matters who is rich or poor, male or female, black or white, cis or straight, cis or trans, conservative or liberal, Israeli or Palestinian, Ukrainian or Russian. The only truth that matters, in that moment, is that the Body of Christ I receive into my body is the same Body of Christ that you receive into your Body, therefore "we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). This is what I mean when I say: Through the story of the Transfiguration, we begin to see God in Jesus and, through Jesus, we begin to see God everywhere else.

The way that we see things matters. When our worldview is shaped by religious fundamentalism or secular atheism, we will see the world as a battle over who is right. When our worldview is shaped by the class warfare of Marxism or the market forces of capitalism, we will see the world as an endless fight for survival. But when our worldview is shaped by the Gospel, our Transfigured Lord will show us a transfigured world that glows brightly with the radiance of God.

I think about the story of the Transfiguration whenever I am outside in the evening and happen to catch those glorious moments near sunset, when all the trees and buildings seem to be shining with a golden light. I feel like I have to stop and make the sign of the cross because it seems like God is granting us a moment, however brief, when we get to see the world the way God sees it all the time.

I think also of another moment of transfiguration, that took place on a busy street corner in Kentucky. It was recorded by a 20th century monk named Thomas Merton. He writes:

"In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness... This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out

loud... I have the immense joy of being [human], a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun” (Merton, Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 156-157).

Friends, the way that we see things matters. I encourage you this week to draw inspiration from Thomas Merton and Julian of Norwich. I invite you to attend deeply to our next celebration of the Eucharist. Above all, I urge you to be followers of Jesus, to see the world as he sees it, full of divine glory. May this Christ like way of seeing transfigure you from the inside out and lead you out to transfigure this world in the name of God, whose name is Love, and in the name of Love, whose name is God.

Amen.