

## Transfiguration – Shrine Mont 2024

The Rev. Deborah Phillips

August 6, 2025

I love coming here every August.

I get to be with such wonderful families like you all.

It clears my head and gets me ready for a new program year at my church in Salem, MA.

This year it means even more as I feel my mother's spirit in every nook and cranny.

There is one other reason I love coming up here during this time of year.

In the morning, the sun rises directly into that window over there.

When it rises, it lights up the shrine so that it dazzles.

Every morning that I've been here, I get to watch this amazing act of God and nature.

Today is the Feast of the Transfiguration,

an event where a few disciples got to see the Son of God,  
the shrine of life, glow so brightly he dazzled.

It is also the 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of this shrine.

Today, we remember what Dr. and Mrs. Woodward started,

and give thanks for those whose love and dedication sustain the shrine today.

The Transfiguration itself is a founding story that needs us to sustain its meaning.

Jesus knew this and so he took three of his disciples with him to pray.

He was not alone then, and he is not alone in sustaining our faith now.

As Jesus is praying, his appearance moves from human form to a more celestial form.

Before their very sleepy eyes, Jesus moves from Son of man to Son of God.

As they continue to stare at the brilliant, cosmic Christ, Moses and Elijah appear.

They are filled with wonder, awe, disbelief and maybe a little fear.

Peter is moved in a new and transformative way.

This experience is drawing him more deeply to the presence of the Divine Love.

He suggests that tabernacles be erected to signify this sacred place and event.

This is not that strange, as throughout Jewish Scripture,

we hear of altars being erected upon sites of revelation.

Rather than making this a precious and private revelation,

Peter wants all to recognize that not just in the Temple in Jerusalem,

but even here on a mountain,

God is with humankind.

Peter's motivation is not to capture this as a one would to post on Facebook.

Peter's motivation is to mark a place where the transfigured Christ can be found.

In the truest sense of the meaning of tabernacle, Peter wants to build a "tent of meeting,"

a place where one could have their human needs met in God's way.

However, the time is not right; it is too soon.

This is not how God intends to meet our needs this day, so they quietly returned. But things are different for us now. The time has come.

Since the resurrection, this is exactly what God intends to use to meet our human needs.

God wants us to be holy agents who are tents of meeting.

God want us to be the traveling shrines where others encounter God.

Through our prayers, we can stir the hearts of those afraid to tend to the Spirit within them.

Through our words, we can lift the hearts of those who have lost their faith.

Through our actions, we can move the stones of isolation and intractability,  
and roll them together to build an altar for our hearts.

Dr. Woodward had this vision and built this shrine  
and much of the surrounding stonework.

But it would have been lost if others hadn't sustained this work these last 99 years,  
others with their own vision like Wilmer Moomaw and his family,  
and the Gibsons, to name but a few.

Then there are the individuals who generously support the shrine and this community,  
without whom Dr. Woodward's dream may have died.

And we, like the disciples who witnessed the Transfiguration, go back to our communities  
and tell all we meet how we experienced the God of light in this place,  
and invite them here to experience it for themselves.

God started something over 2000 years ago in becoming one of us in the person of Jesus Christ,  
in birthing the shrine of love.

Although God sustains us, we are necessary to keep the story of the power of love alive.

This morning and every morning, we devote all that we have and all that we are  
to the living Christ, who glows so powerfully in our lives  
that we too become transfigured beings, the light of Christ to the world.

On this 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of this holy shrine,  
let us remember that we are each a living shrine to the brilliance of Christ.

We too have been transfigured in God's glory

We have been built, stone upon stone, as a tabernacle to God  
enlightened by Christ's transfigured grace.

Amen