

February 14, 2010
Scarboro United Church
Calgary AB
J. Paul Mullen

Read: Luke 9: 28-36

“Seeing Through the Illusion”

Today we are on the mountain top with Jesus, Simon Peter, John and James, ready for a peak experience! How many have been on a retreat, to a camp or an intensive weekend? Naramata?

At the end did you feel a lot closer to the people you had spent the most time with? Or did you have the feeling that your life had changed in some significant way? At the end do you recall wishing that if you could just keep that feeling, or if you could get everyone to feel that way, life would be wonderful.

Back in the 60's and 70's we took groups of 500 High School students to what is now the Banff Center for a weekend of intensive experience.

Last hour of the program was spent on what life would really be like when they got home. That no matter how hard they tried they wouldn't be able to explain to others what the experience was like. It was an experience, always hard to put into words.

Spiritual experience is even harder to put into words. Mystics often speak of how words run out when they try to describe their experience of the holy, which is why we don't need to take this story of Jesus on the mountain, chatting with Moses and Elijah, both dead for hundreds of years, literally.

And even though there is no need to take it literally we can take it seriously. Luke has told this story for a reason. It is a story of a change of consciousness and awareness, a life-changing, transformative moment.

The story has less to do with chatting with ghosts and more to do with the sudden awareness in some of the disciples that there was more to Jesus than meets the eye. They realize that his teaching and his witness are in harmony with the Law and the Prophets, Moses and Elijah. Before they saw him as a teacher and friend, now they see him as so much more.

Our struggle is frequently so much more basic than that. Our struggle is not to grasp the divinity that shines from others but the humanity of others.

Too often we see other people only as a means to an end, objects we can manipulate to get what we want. When people can't or won't give us what we

Cpl. Marie-France Comeau, and possibly more, and assaulted at least two other women, and possibly more.

I do not believe this could have happened if Williams could see women as anything but objects for his perverse gratification, objects he could control and manipulate. If he had any sense of their shared humanity he could not have done what he did.

It is sad also to realize that the church too often has abetted and encouraged such thinking. Clergy telling battered women to go home and try harder, to be more loving and forgiving – exactly the opposite of what is needed, safety and distance.

What will it take before we begin to see and experience, respect and honour, all other people as fully human, children of one creator?

I do not believe we can be consciously violent or oppressive to anyone we see as a fellow human being. Where we need to help each other is with the unconscious sexism and racism that permeates our culture.

Awareness and action for human rights is essential but changing laws and policy is only a beginning. I believe it is critical that we challenge jokes and comments that are sexist and racist in nature as it is often in the workplace and in casual conversation where attitudes are exhibited and reinforced by laughter, agreement or silence.

As God has created us we are all God's children. We all have the presence of the divine within us. When that presence in us greets the same presence in others we will all know peace of the Christ, the Shalom of God.

