

“Lifting the Veil”

2 Corinthians 3:12 –4:2, Luke 9:28-36

The Apostle Paul wants us to pull back a veil so that we may see the transforming power of God.

The primary metaphor in today’s reading from 2 Corinthians is the *veil*. In verses 13-18, the word or a form of it occurs five times, seven if you include verse 4:3 in the reading.

The word *veil* is not a common word, but it’s not unfamiliar either. Attend enough weddings and you’ve probably seen a bride at the altar, her face obscured by a veil. When the pastor says to the groom, “You may now kiss the bride,” he eagerly lifts the veil, revealing the bride in all her shining and smiling glory.

Fewer brides wear veils these days, but many — especially those who love tradition — put on the veil, only for it to later be lifted off.

When I read Isabella’s interview with her mother, Maria and with Libbi Chilia, it was as though the veil was lifted and I could see yet again that our ministry together is powerful and transformative. I share with you Isabella’s interview with her mother which was part of the application for the Divinity scholarship she’ll receive...

I asked my mother a series of questions regarding the history of her faith before asking how she would support me during the journey of my own faith. I first asked her what first introduced her to her journey of faith, to which my mother told me that she was born into a Catholic family and began her journey at birth. Her parents had her baptized and she attended Catholic schools for grade school and high school, and completed the sacraments of

reconciliation, communion and confirmation during that time. I followed up with another question on her religious history, asking how her faith affects her day-to-day life.

To this, she responded, “My faith affects my life daily – in addition to attending services on Sundays, I pray daily for strength and patience through my day and the safety and happiness for my family!” She added, “I always remember others during these prayers who may need them during these times.”

After this, I asked if she doubted her faith before, and my mother said she went through hard times where she questioned her faith and wondered why she felt that God was not with her or did not show her the path God needed her to be on. She never doubted there is a God, but she questioned when she was younger why there is disease, war, and hungry people who are suffering and why God does not just step in and perform miracles to save them all. She mentioned, “As I grew older, I came to understand that God loves us, there is a plan, and we need to trust in that.”

I then asked if she had troubles with her faith, how her parents helped her. She told me, she did not reach out to her parents during those times, but instead, “...going to a Catholic school I was enrolled in religion/theology classes where we would have discussions such as this. I found talking with religious leaders/teachers/peers was helpful during my doubtful times as well as during my strong times too!” Though it is unfortunate my mother felt she could not reach out to her parents, it is heartwarming that she still had a support system within her school life.

After inquiring about my mother’s religious history, I went in depth about how her faith was influenced by me and her support toward my faith.

I asked her how her religious faith strengthened or weakened while she was pregnant with me, in which she reminisced that it strengthened and said, “A pregnancy did not come easy to me, so when [your father] and I felt that it was time to try for a baby, my prayers increased immensely for a baby to be given to us!

Grammie Paolucci [your maternal grandmother] gave us a statue of St. Gerard, “the patron saint for unborn children,” and I prayed to him daily to be blessed with a baby! And then there were more prayers of gratitude throughout the pregnancy!”

I then asked how she would describe her faith during my infancy, to which she responded with how her faith strengthened even further, “You were an excellent baby but had some concerns that had us both so worried! It was then that I put my faith in God to help you through your struggles of tonsils and speech, as well as all the gratitude I had for God to give such a beautiful girl to me and [your father].” My mother smiled and also mentioned, “This may be when the prayers for strength and patience started – it can be tough living with a toddler.”

After joking a bit between each other, I asked her what were her personal feelings and thoughts during my religious growth (events I mentioned included baptism, receiving my first Bible, my first communion, and more.) She described in detail, “I was very proud to watch your religious growth! From day one, you always approached your classes with seriousness, and with an open heart to accept the Lord. As each milestone approached, you prepared yourself and took the time to understand the significance and relevance of the event that was about to happen.” She also mentioned that she admired me volunteering my time to help with church clean up, delivering goods to the shelters as well as visiting the nursing home.

I asked if my mother would continue supporting my faith in Lutheranism, and she responded, ‘I would, of course, continue to support your faith as well as everything you do in life!’ I ended my series of questions by asking her how she may have taught religion differently or improved to my sister in comparison, to which she responded, ‘I have not personally taught religion any differently to you and Mia, however Mia is lucky to have you in addition to us as parents to guide her in her spiritual journey.

She looks up to you and your advice, as well as experience, as she begins her confirmation classes.’ After the lengthy series of questions, I felt pretty uplifted about my mother’s strong support toward my beliefs and how, in a way, her religious journey progressed and strengthened her faith from raising me.

Well Isabella, you made your pastor feel pretty uplifted too. I remember at your confirmation after reading part of your faith statement during the sermon, I suggested that God may be calling you to be a pastor someday. Nobody knows what the future will bring.

This is Transfiguration Sunday. The gospel reading from Luke 9:28-36 tells the story of Jesus’ conversing with Moses and Elijah. Perhaps he and Moses discussed their respective covenants, the covenants of law and grace.

What we learn (among other lessons) is that God is all about unveiling. And here we learn that through Jesus Christ, the veil of the old covenant has been removed and torn away.

We still observe the moral obligations of the law, but the good news is that our obedience to these laws does not ultimately result in our salvation. This is by the grace and mercy of God only. And when we “get” this, we will see the glory of God as we’ve never seen it before.

The glory and radiance of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration is just a glimpse of the glory of God. Peter and the disciples could scarcely bear to look upon it. Some day we shall live in the presence of God, worshiping God when we get to heaven or, as some people put it, when we go to glory.

In the meantime, we need to reaffirm that the veil has been lifted. This does not mean we can throw caution to the wind and live like hellions. Rather, lifting the veil results in *transformation* or *transfiguration*, even for us! “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed ...” (v. 18). The word “transformed” in Greek is a word suggesting a metamorphosis. We are new creations in Christ, Paul says in this same letter (5:17); that is, we have undergone a morphological change. We are new creatures in Christ! As newly transformed, re-morphed and unveiled Christians, we continue to behave with common sense, with due respect and obedience to the moral laws of God and our faith. But we do so not from obligation, but because it is now what we do. It’s who we are. It’s how we roll as Divinity Lutheran Church. The last 3 Sundays our ministry leaders have given our new members a vision of how we roll. We welcome them to join us in what we do.

It is in the context of this new, unveiled reality that we can now continue our ministry. Paul writes, “We do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God’s word; but by the open statement of the truth, we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.”

“We do not lose heart.” How easy it has been over the past 24 months to lose heart! Our way of life has been radically altered. But we do not lose heart.

We continue to work in the vineyards of the Lord, as those who have been unveiled, and see, as in a mirror, the glory of God.

May the peace of God . . .

#671 – Shine, Jesus, Shine