

It's easy for us to rag on Peter for not having the whole following Jesus thing figured out, as if the rest of us do anyway. And it would be easy for my generation to automatically associate Peter to those with a little more... life experience than us: that there's this rather hard time of letting go, and there's this colossal fear of change; as if those with a little more life experience don't have to deal with their fair share of it: physical health always presenting something, not to mention the primary care or other physicians of that health switching facilities on a whim, or the children and grandchildren always on the move, let alone the rest of the world around them seemingly changing all the time without their permission. But no, the stereotype will always remain: those with a little more life experience just cannot do change. Or it would be easy for them to rag on my generation: as if we don't appreciate tradition or stopping and smelling the roses and not depending on technology to run our lives, as if you would never see any of us just craving the time spent with family to get away from the chaos of the world, and you would never catch us at the parks or the beachfronts without a phone in our hand, as if we cannot recognize the breathtaking beauty of God. Nevertheless, the stereotypes will remain for all of us, because it's just easier if they do, including in the church.

After worship, we'll have our second round of what we're calling town halls, as we're trying to ensure open lines of communication about the on-going joint ministry efforts here at Divinity, and perhaps also attempting to knock a bit off those stereotypes, because we all recognize change has happened and will continue to happen whether we grant our permission or not. And so, it's only fitting that there's that line in the Gospel story today, where Jesus nudges Peter, and nudges us, too "Get up and do not be afraid." Well, sorry Jesus, but we are a little afraid, and not just those with a little more life experience, but us younger whipper snappers, too. Because we would all like a little more comfort, a little more assurance, a little more knowledge that it just might be okay. As cliché as it may sound, we are all in this...interesting, perhaps too interesting of church terrain together.



Now, earlier this week, our Northeastern Ohio Synod staff with our Bishop Laura Barbins and the various assistants and specialists, basically stole our town hall idea; as if Divinity is the only one doing this, of course, but we'll go ahead and say that our Synod staff basically stole our idea, and had a virtual one this past Tuesday evening. And as our Bishop was going through some of the visions and updates on the wider church ministry front, there were these images to almost reassure the 50 or so viewing this on Zoom, of all the good that's being done in ELCA congregations from Ashtabula to Mansfield, from Vermillion to Massillon. And then, all of a sudden, this one popped up of last year's Confirmation students, Molly, Lexa, Penelope, Gianna, Alex and Robert working with Cathrine, Mary and Karen to fill mugs for the Redeemer Crisis Center. As that image of Divinity was shown, Bishop Barbins reassured us with the caption beside it: "every ministry site is built in love as we work together for the sake of the Gospel."

It's quite possible only one person on that Zoom town hall knew what this picture entailed, and there was no way for me to chime in to let the rest of the audience know what was going on there. But I guess that's not what we're here for anyway. We're not here to publicly proclaim that every once in a while, we do defy the stereotypes: that yes, at times even in the church, those with a little more life experience will stay in their same pew for their whole life and never leave that lane of churchy being, and those younger folk will find their corner youth room and never leave, either. But every once in a while, we defy the stereotypes and work alongside each other, because we know there is something more to Jesus saying, "get up and do not be afraid," because there is somebody on the other side of the

table, who has a story just as cherished by God as yours. There is someone on the other side of the pew who wants to make a difference just as much as you. There is someone on the other side of the sanctuary who is just as scared about what lies ahead as you, but there is still something going on within them that refuses to just sit back and let this world with all its captivating beauty amidst all the chaos, to just let it all pass them by.

One of the interesting takes about Peter, who all generations will continue to rag on only forever, is that in this Transfiguration story, what Peter is longing for in setting up these tents or dwelling places; what Peter is truly craving is the church. And soon enough, it would come, and Peter's hope for a place and a people to take all this Jesus in, continues in you. And as easy as it would be to rag on our wider church, including that it doesn't always realize the good that is still being done on the ground level of this whole following Jesus thing; they got it right on this one: "every ministry site," including this one, "is built in love as we work together for the sake of the Gospel." Yes, we have some differences here, to be sure. We don't always understand each other across the generations. We never will to the fullest extent. But we do know we are here together. We are here because, in spite of all the changes emerging without our permission, we are not going to take it all on our own. We have and will continue to work together. And even though we will be scared at times, we will still get up and try with faith anyway, because the one who brought it all to life refused to stay on the mountaintop, but insisted on coming down to us to live and dwell and work with and help us rise time and time again. So, for that Greatest News for all of us, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!