

When people who don't live here taunt me with the supposed rainy climate of Seattle I just laugh. This is paradise compared to wherever they live. In exchange for a few days of grey in January and February we get -- little snow, no humidity in summer, and, best of all, we are blessed in our bugs. We have very few insect pests. I've experienced the six-inch cockroaches of the Chesapeake and the mosquitoes just about everywhere else. But we have very few bugs.

But there is one bug I miss in Seattle. We don't have any fireflies. In the summer of 1969 I went back to Iowa on vacation with my family to visit relatives. I was eight years old. I was introduced to summer humidity. I was horrified. How did those people breath and live in that stuff? But I also saw fireflies for the first time. And I was entranced and charmed as those mysterious little stars blinked on and off in their slow flights. On those hot summer evenings my siblings and I would chase fireflies with my cousins. Like everybody, I suppose, we ran around

trying to capture them in glass jars to get a closer look, thinking that they would always shine for us like nature's lamps.

When I read the account in the Gospel of the Transfiguration, which we heard again today, I am struck by the light. “[H]is face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light.” On the mountaintop Jesus’ divinity is experienced briefly by the Apostles as light. But, then, that is the way God has represented Himself to us throughout salvation history. In the beginning God said, “Let there be light . . . and God saw how good the light was.” Light is special to God. He made it the fastest material thing in the universe. The speed of light is the measure of all lesser speeds and travel. We human beings, as God’s creations, are naturally drawn to light and are conditioned to see it as good, whether in the form of a camp fire, a sunny beach, or fireflies. So, it’s no surprise that Jesus reveals His glory to Peter, James, and John via the brightness of God. What Jesus wants to teach the Apostles (and us) is that we can, and do, share in His light.

But that can be hard for us to believe or understand -- because we human beings don't realize that we are like fireflies. I said fireflies are beautiful, but the thing about the fireflies we kids caught in our Mason jars is that they lost their allure once in the jar. Then it became obvious to us that most of the time fireflies don't glow. They really just looked like ordinary flies – bugs. Take away their fire and they're nothing special. We kids didn't even want to keep them. They were boring.

That is also how we can feel about ourselves – we're bugs, flies nothing special. I recently read a book by Bob Schutts entitled, Be Healed: A Guide to Encountering the Powerful Love of Jesus in your Life. There's a chapter in it called, "The Beloved Son." In it Schutts asks, "How do you perceive yourself? Do you see yourself as the sum of all your weaknesses and failures, or the image of the beloved son?" Do you believe you are cherished and deeply loved or inherently worthless and easily discarded – basically a bug? We are not the sum of our failures and sins. But we are also not the sum of our accomplishments,

successes, and religious devotional practices. That is what many of us think deep down, but the foundation for our relationship with God is simply being His beloved children.

Do we believe that? On the Mountain of the Transfiguration the Heavenly Father tells the Apostles, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” There is so much light they fall to the ground. Too much light can do that to us fallen human beings. We have trouble accepting it – taking it in.

Whether you form your identity from your failures or from your accomplishments, can you imagine God saying about you, “This is my beloved son (or daughter), with whom I am well pleased,” regardless of your actions? Take those words of God into your prayer, “You are my beloved child.” Repeat them to yourself slowly. Those words are meant for you. God means them. We are each loved by God simply because in our very being we are, regardless of failures or accomplishments, beloved Children of God. Through your baptism you are part of the

Body of Christ, part of the Beloved Son of God. The light of Christ is meant to shine in you. And it does.

That is what I mean by saying we human beings are all fireflies. We are ordinary creatures. Most of the time we're kind of boring, seen from the outside. But every once in-a-while we shine like fireflies. There are moments in life when we seem to dance, we briefly glow, and we recognize there is Someone else speaking or working through us. We're beautiful. We tend to write off those experiences as random, or just peak moments.

But the Transfiguration is meant to teach us that those flashes of light are not illusions. They reveal who we really are deep down. In this world we live as fireflies and God's grace shines in us only momentarily, but there will come a day outside of time, in heaven, when we will no longer blink on and off, but shine always. We too will be transfigured. The light won't scare us or mystify us anymore. We'll recognize it as who we are. In Jesus Christ we too are meant to shine like the sun.