

Our gospel of the Transfiguration concerns the way that how we normally see often misses the presence of God's Power and Kingdom. Today I want to continue our Rerouting with a story of faulty sight from my own life: on August 11, 1977, the day before I was to take my Driver's License test on my sixteenth birthday, I had a terrible scare -- and a revelation. I knew that you had to take an eye examine to pass. I wasn't worried. I could see fine. But just to test it I put my hand over my right eye. Great. Then over my left eye . . . everything was a blur. I didn't understand. How could I go 16 years without realizing that my right eye was about 20/500? I was panicked. I had to have that license! I was too old for the bus. I now have to confess something: I cheated on my drivers examine. Kids, don't imitate me on this! But while the examiner was looking at the letters on his screen to see if I was getting them right, I subtly shifted my left eye over to the right eye slot.

I now realize that all my life I had unconsciously trained my good left eye to take control when I needed to see distances. The brain is a

weird thing. The switch was so natural I didn't even notice I was doing it. But some things then made sense. At a later ROTC physical I flunked depth-perception because I was only using one eye. Maybe that was also why I couldn't hit a baseball or shoot a jump-shot very well. I mention this story because it's an example of what it's like to have a health issue without even knowing it. I'll come back to that.

Biology 101 tells us that signs an organism is alive include Growth, Reproduction, and Responsiveness (that an organism is changed by its environment and impacts its environment in turn). Now think about the Church. Is it alive by those standards? Is it growing? Is it reproducing itself? Does it have an impact on its environment – the world? I would say the Church is in very poor health – at least in the West. It's not growing. It's not reproducing new members fast enough to replace those dying. And it has little effect on the surrounding world that I can see. Catholics have spent decades responding to the secular society's

agenda and priorities, but I can't see that the Church has much impact on the world at all.

And then let's examine our own individual faith in terms of the biological signs of life. Is my own faith growing? Am I spiritually reproducing, bringing new members into the Church or increasing the faith of others? Does my personal faith make a positive impact on other people that produces change in them? Hmm.

My point is that, when it comes to our faith, most of us aren't healthy – and, as with me and my eyesight, we may not even know what the problem is – or that there's anything wrong at all. Growing up I hadn't even realized that there was something wrong with how I perceived the world. But I literally couldn't see its depth. Such faulty spiritual vision is what I want to preach on the rest of this homily.

Jesus founded the Catholic Church, and baptized you and me into it, to grow, reproduce, and change the world. But there seems to be something wrong with us. This week I want to offer a few key words

that can help us diagnose how sick we each are, and help in the discovery of how, and how much, we need to reorient our vision.

FAITH – an unhealthy understanding of faith says faith is a private opinion or belief with little bearing on life outside the Church. A healthy understanding of faith defines it as the access to truth. Faith is the way into God’s vision of reality. It opens us to transformation of one’s whole life in that reality. Faith is our response to God’s work in us. (Luke 1:38), “May it be done to me according to your word.” Faith is meant to be shared. And it takes you somewhere, as Mary goes to Elizabeth.

PARISH – An unhealthy meaning of parish is – the place where I go to mass. It’s a set of buildings where I enjoy the company of others. A healthy conception of parish flows from Heb. 11:8 – 10. [HOW TO USE THE BIBLE] “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs

of the same promise, for he was looking forward to a city with foundations, whose architect and maker is God.” “Parish” comes from a Greek word meaning “sojourning.” As a parish, we have a destination, we’re a community of Disciples on the move – sojourning – we have a destination we’re striving for and need one another for the journey.

LAITY – the unhealthy way to look at lay people is to see them as consumers of spiritual services provided by the professional Church people, or silent spectators who support those priests and nuns in their work for the Kingdom. The healthy concept of laity is what St. Peter wrote in I Peter 2:9. “You are a chosen race, royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God’s own so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” That’s you the lay person – called to holiness and turning one’s whole life into sacrifice. You are primarily responsible for the conversion of the world. Most of us get exactly backwards. The laity is not meant to support the

clergy's role in the world. The Clergy's role is to prepare and support the laity's role and mission of evangelizing the world.

CONVERSION – The unhealthy form of this idea sees conversion as needing to happen to someone else – the non-Catholic Christian, the atheist, who needs to get to the RCIA program. It's not about me. I'm a cradle Catholic. A healthy definition of conversion is: the decision to live my life for Jesus. It's the Apostles dropping their nets. It doesn't happen by accident. You have to decide. Listen to Gal. 2:19-20. "I have been crucified with Christ: yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me." I will live for the one who died for me. This is a long-term project. My on-going life now has a new purpose.

All these words (and we'll look at several more and go deeper on Wednesday) are meant to reveal LIFE - the new life available in Christ – Spiritual Biology 101. But we have trouble seeing that. At the Transfiguration the Apostles finally see what's really there in Jesus, His

divinity shining through. Up to that point they had seen only what the world had seen.

What about us? To what extent have I allowed an unhealthy, worldly form of the faith to shape my Christian life? Does my vision of what Jesus offers us lack depth and clarity without me even knowing it? Am I looking at the life with flawed vision? The Rerouting journey asks us to humbly recognize that possibility as we go forward next week.