

Trinity Church  
October 19, 2008

Pentecost 23  
RCL, Year A, Proper 24

A Sermon Preached by The Rev. James C. Ransom

*Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God, and worship him upon his holy hill;  
for the Lord our God is the Holy One. (Psalm 99:9)*

Moses makes of God the essential request as Moses stands in God's presence on Mount Sinai: "Show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight." "And show me your glory." I think these requests are essential because our religion is based on the conviction that the Lord our God, the Holy One, is known to us.

God is known to us through the commandments, the Torah, that shows us God's justice and mercy — the content of God's love for us. And God has shown us God's glory, God's goodness, God's beauty, God's grace, God's Spirit. And God has promised that God does not remain aloof and hidden in the clouded summit of Mount Sinai, but that God will go with God's people, be present with them and to them. Yes, God has shown us God's glory, and God's ways, and is present with us. That is what God promises to Moses.

This promise puts a halo around what Genesis says about human beings as God's creatures. Genesis says, "In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." God created us with the capacity, the image, to see as God sees, to do as God does. But it was on Mount Sinai that God showed us God's glory and revealed God's goodness so that we can walk in God's ways and show forth God's glory.

This encounter of God with Moses on Mount Sinai comes just after the famous disaster with the golden calf. God's people lose heart; they think Moses is dead on Mount Sinai; that there is no God who led them out of Egypt. So they gathered their jewelry, melted it down, and fashioned a golden calf, an idol, and they made it their god, and they worshiped it. They chose the wrong image — they chose the calf and deemed it the image of God that was theirs. When Moses comes down from the mountain and puts things right again, he begs God never to leave them, to travel with them, to make the ark of the covenant the outward sign of God's presence, so that they will not forget God, but do God's will and walk in God's ways. God agreed.

When Jesus is presented with the coin in today's Gospel reading, Jesus asks the essential question: Whose image is on this coin? Caesar's image, they replied. If Caesar's image is on the coin, it must belong to Caesar, so let Caesar have what is his. The gold coin with its image is like the gold calf with its image, an idol, a false god, never to be worshiped. But, Jesus says, what image then do you bear? The answer is clear. We bear the image of God. We are his. We carry within us God's goodness and glory. We must give to God what bears God's image. We give ourselves, our souls and bodies, as a holy and living sacrifice. Jesus says that is the image I choose, and I am a holy and living sacrifice to God.

Today we celebrate and honor those in our parish life who live the image they bear and who show us in their faithfulness and goodness the way God has called us to be.

The first is Pat Shaw, in whose honor the Vestry has given a paten for use for Holy Communion. Pat has bravely undertaken many ministries at Trinity, from working on the lawns and gardens to leading a capital campaign, to being a parish warden for a decade. And Pat does God's will in

the community, tirelessly volunteering at the Red Cross and Sarah's Hope. In Pat we see God's glory in a soul and body wholly dedicated to God.

The second is Loraine Lewis, who has sung for 32 years in the choir here at Trinity, and has recently retired from that ministry, though Loraine still volunteers at ACTC and the Surprise Shop and is the Lay Eucharistic Visitor at Edenwald. When I said she had to be in church today, Loraine said that she was just doing what any Christian would do. She was nothing extraordinary. Of course, Loraine thinks that because she has no other image than God's and, like Christ, gives herself wholly to God and to God's service. She is doing what comes naturally to one who believes. But we can see how filled she is with the Spirit, how she shows us God's glory.

Last, but not least, there are the Shop volunteers. For 44 years they have worked to serve God and the Church, and today we dedicate that ministry anew to God as we reopen the refurbished and redecorated rectory. So many new hands have come to the work, new leaders, and new talents given in service to God. Lives lived to God's glory. That is our image as Christians. It is the image God has given to us.

Every man, woman and child in this parish is called to show God's glory in their dedication, in their service, in their goodness and beauty, just as Pat, Loraine, and the Shop leaders do. Together then,

*we proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God, and worship him, for the Lord our God is the holy one.*