

- Oh God, You reveal yourself and declare Your will to people in every age. We come before You now, seeking the gift of Your countenance, and the guidance of Your spirit. Shine upon us transforming light, to illumine the shadowed areas of our lives. Let us hear Your Word with an awe that moves us to listen with our whole being. Change us from one degree of glory to another that we may respond to Your truth, not just on the mountaintop, but also in the valleys where You call us to serve. Amen. You may be seated.

- Let us pray together the prayer for illumination.

All: Open our hearts and our minds, o God, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, so that, as the Word is read and proclaimed, we might hear with joy what You say to us this day. Amen.

- The first reading is taken from the book of Exodus, the 34th chapter, starting with the 29th verse. Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them. Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. Afterward, all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining, and Moses would put the veil on his face again until he went in to speak with the Lord. This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God. (Pipe organ plays pitches) ♪ The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient ♪ ♪ The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient ♪ ♪ The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient ♪ ♪ He sitteth between the cherubims ♪ ♪ Be the earth never so unquiet ♪ ♪ He sitteth between the cherubims ♪ ♪ Be the earth never so unquiet ♪ ♪ He sitteth, he sitteth between the cherubims ♪ ♪ Be the earth never so unquiet ♪ ♪ The Lord is great, the Lord is great ♪ ♪ The Lord is great, is great in Zion ♪ ♪ And high above all people ♪ ♪ And high above all people ♪ ♪ They shall give thanks unto Thy Name ♪ ♪ They shall give thanks, give thanks unto Thy Name ♪ ♪ Which is great, great, is great, is great, ♪ ♪ Wonderful, and holy ♪ ♪ Is great, wonderful, great, wonderful, and holy ♪ ♪ O magnify the Lord our God ♪ ♪ And fall, fall, fall, fall ♪ ♪ Down before His footstool ♪ ♪ For He is holy ♪ ♪ And fall, fall, fall, down before His footstool ♪ ♪ For He is holy ♪ ♪ Glory be to the Father and to the Son ♪ ♪ And to the Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Glory be to the Father and to the Son ♪ ♪ And to the Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ As it was in the beginning ♪ ♪ As it was in the beginning ♪ ♪ Is now, is now, is now and ever shall be ♪ ♪ And ever shall be ♪ ♪ Amen, amen, amen ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪

- This reading is taken from the Gospel according to Luke, chapter nine, beginning with the 28th verse. Now about eight days after these sayings, Jesus took with Him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And while He was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly, they saw two men, Moses and Elijah talking to Him. They appeared in glory, and were speaking of His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep. But since they had stayed awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Just as they were leaving, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here. "Let us make three dwellings: one for you, "one for Moses, and one for Elijah," not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then, from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is My Son, My chosen. "Listen to Him." When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen. This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- The Epistle lesson from 2nd Corinthians three, beginning at verse 12. Paul writes, Since then we have such a hope, we act with great boldness. Not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside, but their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day, whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds, but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

- Of course, it is a privilege to be able to worship with you, and to think with you about these matters, and to be lead by this awesome choir. On this eighth Sunday of Epiphany, there is nothing ordinary about the claims of biblical faith. There is nothing about these claims that can be understood, according to our usual scientific, objective, or common sense notions of life. For the Bible is organized around these explosive moments when the holiness of God touches down in our midst and changes everything. And these touchdown moments are not sweet, and they are not romantic, and they are not pious. They are rather moments of threat, and of risk, when everything is shattered. So these readings assigned for today are about three such dangerous eruptions of the holy, and I'm gonna talk about them but I don't want you to try to understand them. I just want you to pay attention. In the first one, Moses comes down from the mountain, he had been talking with God, and he had the two tablets of the Torah, he knew that much. What he didn't know is that his face was all aglow, that his whole life had taken on a changed, shining presence because he had been talking with God, says the text, and when he came down, that holy danger continued. In the second reading, in the Gospel of Luke, three special disciples are with Jesus on the mountain. The mountain is not named, maybe it's Sinai. But the disciples watched while He prayed, and they were

astonished, because while He prayed and drew near to talk with God, His face was changed. Doesn't that sound familiar? Just like Moses. His whole body took on dazzling light, just like Moses. And in these fairly anti-Semitic texts, it is confessed that all the Jewish claims for God's holiness are now caught up in the body of Jesus. Jesus becomes the pivot for God's holiness in human history. And they are terrified, because they discovered that Jesus is not user-friendly. But I don't want to talk about that. I wanna talk about the third text, in Corinthians. The Corinthian church is kind of like most churches I know, kind of a mess. Quarreling about Christ and culture issues, ordinary people arguing about money and meat, and leadership and power, and sexuality, common agenda. Paul writes to these Christians in saying, you are not ordinary people. Because at the core of your existence, the holiness of God has exploded and redefined everything. What counts, finally, is that the incursion of God's holiness touches our life and touches all of our life together and makes us different. So these three texts run from the holiness of God to the oddness of the Church. First, Paul wants the church at Corinth to be connected to Jesus. He says, "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God, "seeing the glory of the Lord." It is precisely and exactly in the life, in the human life of Jesus, that we confess to know about the holiness of God. The point is so obvious that we almost miss it. But it is for that reason that the Church must over and over and over tell its Jesus stories. Because it is in the Jesus stories that we understand the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth. Which means holiness does not happen in some large, grand, religious, magnificent way, even in a great cathedral. But it happens where a son is welcomed home, and where a neighbor is cared for, and where a whore is loved, and where a leper is cleansed, and where a crowd is fed, and where a guilty person is forgiven, and where a crippled woman stands up and laughs and dances. Not mystical, not supernatural, not voodoo, but in the life of Jesus, we see all that God intends and wants and asks. So daily, so concrete, so engaged with hurt, so self-giving. The church at Corinth is not called to some pious, goosey religion. It is called to practice the memory of Jesus, present tense. Christians sort these matters out around Jesus because we are endlessly seduced by imagining that the glory is to be found in our technology, or our brightness, or our achievement, or our power, or our wealth, or as we say at Georgia Tech, in our basketball, or in our loveliness, or in our fitness. No, no, no. Holiness takes the form of suffering being healed. So Paul writes secondly, using this odd word, metamorphosis, changed form, "All of us with unveiled faces, "seeing the glory of God, are being transformed "into the same image, from one degree of glory "to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." Paul writes about being changed, being altered, being made different, being made new. And this text wants to affirm that, not only is God in the business of transformation, but transformation is the primal human yearning. As creatures of God, it's what our life's about. What makes us human is the reach out toward us of the holiness of God. So Paul imagines that the Christian life consists in living close enough to God, and in the presence of God over time, enough to be healed and to be made whole, to become more like God's own self. And the Church consists in those who have taken as their life's work trying to stand close enough to God to be touched by God's strange holiness. The news is that we are in the presence of the God who is at work. We are being acted upon, and addressed and cared for, and suffered over. Now, transformation is a seductive business. A lot of us would like to be transformed into the dominant image of our society, more winsome, more clever, more competent, more ambitious, more secure, and we're all a community of high achievers, or we wouldn't be here. But that's not the transformation that our life consists in. Or, it is seductive to think I can transform myself, so 10 ways to a happy body, and six steps to good sex, and four disciplines toward prosperity. But the news is from different from that, it is that God has not quit God's transformative work. Or talk about transformation might end us

in despair, because we know in the most hidden parts of our lives, that we don't want to change. And we will never be changed. But the news is that we are being changed by the power of God, even against our despair. So Paul writes to these day-to-day Christians, to pay attention to the transformative power of God's holiness that is making all things new. But God is not yet done with those whom God calls to be more caring, more joyous, more free, more obedient, that God has not quit until we gather around the throne to say, free at last, thank God almighty, free at last. Now I'm a little nervous about saying this to you, because it sounds a little bit too much preoccupied with us. Until Paul delivers his zinger. Whenever you read therefore in the Bible, duck. "Therefore, since it is by God's mercy "that we are engaged in this ministry, "we do not lose heart." He just kind of threw in the word ministry. So finally, dear brothers and sisters, the Church is not a group of people bent on self help, or well-being, or transformation, or metamorphosis. It is rather a community whose very life consists in ministry. God's holiness is not for our pious masturbation, but it is given to Moses, and to Jesus, and to the Corinthians, and belatedly to us, to be engaged in the large work that belongs to our very identity, as creatures of God. I don't know what the word ministry conjures for you. Seems like such a marginal kind of business in our society, so institutional. But it's not institutional, it's not marginal. It is the day-to-day human work of bringing more and more of our life under the joy and purpose and power of God. I was reading some of your campus stuff this morning about political correctness, and I think all that stuff about political correctness is a smokescreen from the real issues, left or right. It's a very different thing to think about bringing more of life under the joy and purpose and power of the God who heals and transforms and liberates. Ministry is not an add-on, it's not an elective for the second Saturday of the spring term, though that may be a good thing, but it's a different way of living that lets the liberating power of God operate for the sake of human dignity and social justice and healed creation. And the news is that that power has been entrusted to folks like us. Paul says, we have this ministry, not because God is heavy-handed, or authoritarian, or self-serving, but by God's mercy it is because of God's gentle, caring, engaged, compassionate purpose that we are able to be human in odd ways in the world for the sake of the world. The first steps into that odd mode of life are not easy. Not easy where I live, not easy on this campus, not easy in a world that has committed to greed and brutality and ambition. But Paul says, we do not lose heart. We will not be talked out of our identity and our purpose and our vocation and our vision. We do not lose heart because the work is rooted in God's holiness and is driven by God's Spirit, and that's enough. So to see the sequence of these texts, holiness erupts and glows, holiness transforms, holiness becomes mercy for ministry. Now I confess to you, I don't understand those stories about Moses and Jesus. But take those stories and imagine what it was like to have that story told and heard and trusted. The story of our life is not flat and one-dimensional. But it is centered in a shattering explosion that makes all things new. So the good word is, do not lose heart. God has not quit and will not quit. Such is our confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Such confidence. It is enough. Amen. (Pipe organ begins playing) ♪ Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart ♪ ♪ Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art ♪ ♪ Thou my best thought, by day or by night ♪ ♪ Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light ♪ ♪ Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true Word ♪ ♪ I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord ♪ ♪ Thou and Thou only, first in my heart ♪ ♪ Great God of Heaven, my treasure Thou art ♪ ♪ Great God of Heaven, my victory won ♪ ♪ May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Son ♪ ♪ Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, ♪ ♪ Still be my vision, o Ruler of all ♪

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

Celebrant: Let us pray. Please be seated. Holy God, upon the mountain you revealed our Messiah, who by His death and resurrection would fulfill both the law and the prophets. You are King, and high above all people, yet when we turn toward Christ, the veil which separates You from us is stripped away. This is a frightening prospect to us, o God, and sometimes we prefer not to see You or be seen by You because of our shame and fear. We are afraid of what You would see if You look upon us, and what You would demand if we look upon You. We dare to approach You, not because of who we are, but because of who You are. Not because of what we have done for You, but because of what You have done for us. Not because of the obedience with which we have served You, but because of the love with which You have sought us. So we come before You, o Lord, secure in the faith that even though we deserve abandonment, You will never abandon us. That even though we can never merit Your love, You will always love us. You will never stop trying to make us worthy of Your love, to incline our hearts to Your Will, to set our feet on the path to peace and justice. For this love, a love that demands obedience, yet woos the disobedient, we are grateful and humbled. And this love, we know, has the power to overcome our reluctance and change us in deep, transforming ways. As we accept Your love, give us the courage to accept the ministry to which You have called us. As we look upon Your chosen one, transform us into His image, that we might carry out the work of Christ in the world. Reform us into a community of love and self-giving, so that when the world gazes upon us, they will see the radiance of Christ and know Your love. Teach us to care for all those whom You love, those who are sick, those who are hurting, those who suffer from grief, those who are depressed, those who are fearful, those who live with violence, those who are in need, those who are human, like us. Teach us that there is more than enough of resources, peace, love, and hope for all Your children, when we allow You to order our priorities and form us into a community of faith, a community of liberating love. Transform us into that community, transform us into Your people, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen. Let us present our offerings as a generous outpouring of gratitude for the love we have received through Jesus Christ, and for use in the ministry to which we have been called. (Orchestra tuning) (Joyful orchestral music) ♪ ♪ Rejoice in the Lord always, ♪ ♪ And again I say, rejoice ♪ ♪ Rejoice in the Lord always, ♪ ♪ And again I say, rejoice ♪ ♪ Rejoice in the Lord always, ♪ ♪ And again I say, rejoice ♪ ♪ Rejoice in the Lord always, ♪ ♪ And again I say, rejoice ♪ ♪ Let your moderation be known unto all men ♪ ♪ Be known unto all men ♪ ♪ The Lord is at hand, the Lord is at hand ♪ ♪ Rejoice in the Lord always ♪ ♪ And again I say, rejoice ♪ ♪ Rejoice in the Lord always ♪ ♪ And again, again, again I say, rejoice ♪ ♪ And again, again I say, rejoice ♪ ♪ Again I say, rejoice ♪ ♪ Be careful for nothing, ♪ ♪ But in everything by prayer and supplication ♪ ♪ With thanksgiving let your requests ♪ ♪ Be made known ♪ ♪ Be careful for nothing, be careful for nothing ♪ ♪ But in everything by prayer and supplication ♪ ♪ With thanksgiving let your requests ♪ ♪ Be made known unto God ♪ ♪ And the peace of God, ♪ ♪ Which passeth all understanding ♪ ♪ Shall keep your hearts and minds ♪ ♪ Through Jesus Christ our Lord ♪ ♪ And the peace of God, ♪ ♪ Which passeth all understanding ♪ ♪ Shall keep your hearts and minds ♪ ♪ Through Jesus Christ our Lord ♪ ♪ Through Jesus Christ our Lord ♪ ♪ Rejoice in the Lord always ♪ ♪ And again I say rejoice ♪ ♪ Rejoice in the Lord always ♪ ♪ And again I say rejoice ♪ ♪ Rejoice in the Lord always ♪ ♪ And again I say rejoice ♪ ♪ Rejoice in the Lord always ♪ ♪ And again, again, again I say rejoice ♪ ♪ And again, again I say rejoice ♪ ♪ Again I say rejoice ♪ (Pipe organ continues playing) ♪ Praise God from whom all blessings flow ♪ ♪ Praise God all creatures here below ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts ♪ ♪ Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia, alleluia ♪ ♪ Alleluia ♪

- Let us pray. God of grace, we give thanks for the abundance with which You have enriched our lives. We are especially grateful for the light of Jesus Christ, which reveals Your love. With these gifts, we pray that Your light might shine through us, to offer hope to a world of darkness. Extend these gifts beyond our reach to touch and change lives through Your living presence. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen. Let us join together in praying the Lord's Prayer.

All: Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and glory forever. Amen.

- Arise, shine. For the light has come among us, and the glory of God has risen before us. God has loved us from before all time. In our here and now, let us receive and reveal God's love through the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Go forth to love God in all that you do. ♪ Amen, amen ♪ ♪ Amen, amen ♪ (Pipe organ begins playing) ♪ O wondrous sight, o vision fair ♪ ♪ Of glory that the Church shall share ♪ ♪ Which Christ upon the mountain shows ♪ ♪ Where brighter than the sun He glows ♪ ♪ From age to age the tale declares, ♪ ♪ How with the three disciples there, ♪ ♪ With Moses and Elijah meet, ♪ ♪ The Lord holds converse high and sweet ♪ ♪ The law and prophets there have place, ♪ ♪ Two chosen witnesses of grace ♪ ♪ The Father's voice from out the cloud ♪ ♪ Proclaims His only Son aloud ♪ ♪ With shining face and bright array ♪ ♪ Christ deigns to manifest today ♪ ♪ What glory shall be theirs above, ♪ ♪ Who joy in God with perfect love ♪ ♪ And faithful hearts are raised on high ♪ ♪ By this great vision's mystery ♪ ♪ For which in joyful strains we raise ♪ ♪ The voice of prayer, the hymn of praise ♪ (Pipe organ continues playing)