If you've ever been a proofreader you know a proven technique:  read each line backwards. Proofreaders say it's the best way to overcome our way of seeing what we think we see.

This morning we have the text in front of us—from St. Mark—the telling of the Transfiguration experience, a story in Jesus's life we get two times annually. Once on this Sunday—always the Sunday before Lent—and again on its own major feast, August 6th. Take note of this: the Transfiguration of Jesus, unlike Christmas and Easter and Pentecost, is given to us twice.

The great Anglican writer GK Chesterton once said, "any scene can be more clearly and freshly seen if it's seen upside down."

The story is at once mystical and straightforward. Jesus comes alive in brightness; his face shines like the sun. With him were Moses, carrying the tablets of the law, and the prophet Elijah. Moses represents continuity with the giving of the ancient law; Elijah represents continuity with the great insights of the prophets.

That mountaintop experience represents a mystical moment. If you think of the mystical moments you've experienced I bet you'd agree that it's not guaranteed that an observer, standing outside the scene, will see the same thing as those who are caught up in it. Your wedding day, from your view and experience, was not the same for your family and friends.

Yet the New Testament is utterly clear and consistent that the Transfiguration is something not only for Jesus but also his friends.

The account also says that they were awestruck—overcome by fear—but Peter, fearful or not, was always ready to blurt out something: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." It's an understandable instinct. We who build and operate churches understand it. Let's build something. Let's keep it where it is. Jesus, of course, eventually orders them to go down the mountain with him. And that action was just as important as going up into that mystical moment.

This morning several of us are making public professions of faith for the first time; getting confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church, and Holly is reaffirming her faith. The action is the same—the bishop lays hands connection to the whole church,

even as the words are a little different. Lest you think this is only about them or me, hear me clearly: this is about all of us because every one of us is making a promise today and every one of us is opening ourselves to the power of God's love to transfigure us.

To publicly affirm a desire to be part of the Christian faith is countercultural. In Maine—the least religious state in the country—not very many of us attend church or synagogue or mosque. For all of religion's powerful corrective to human violence, to take one example, religion as personal, ethnic, or national code is a purveyor of violence—and not just the violence of terrorism or racism. Religion can practice violence by speech, by exclusion, by moral judgment.
In fact, it's on precisely those grounds that many of our friends might not want to be here with us, doing what we're doing.

But God's gift of transfiguration is a gift of a new way of seeing. I suggest three ways in which we need the gift of this penetrating sight and light.

The first is to see persons. Your boss or your daughter in law might be jerks. Imagine if you could see that your boss is worried about a marriage that isn't working, or that your daughter-in-law is a survivor of abuse which fills with her anxiety. In the light of transfiguration sometimes we can see in people the way a proofreader sees what is really in a line: by reading it backwards. Or ask an artist who sees a sketch by turning it upside down.

The second is to see issues. Issues threaten to divide us—divide the Church, divide families, divide a society. The light of transfiguration equips us to say "this is what I believe" instead of "this is where you're wrong" —which transforms conversation, enabling us to see with more penetrating eyes at least a small fraction of what God sees.

The third is to see God. Where some see contradiction, we see love. Where some see emptiness, we see a creative process that is not only still happening, but also one to which we are continually invited to participate.

Transfiguration opens our eyes to see people, to see issues, and to see God. It changes everything.

On the mountaintop there came a moment when Jesus said: “Now we’re done. We go down from the mountain, back to what we were doing before. Back to all those difficult people, those hard issues and a God who is often a complete mystery to us.”

But the going down from the mountain was sign that Jesus was asking his friends to be permanently committed to the journey—rejoicing that the exploration never ends, rejoicing in a way to see that goes beyond politeness to true hospitality, rejoicing especially to see God in one another and then having been transfigured to joyously nourish the Light in the communities we build and the people we serve.