

Reflection
12 Pentecost, Year A
Romans 12:1-8

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“Be transformed by the renewing of your minds.”

So, where were you last Monday? You might not easily recall until I remind you that last Monday was the day of the solar eclipse. *Now* I bet you remember!

So often we remember where we were and who we were with when national tragedy strikes. Some of us remember where we were when President Kennedy was shot, or where we were on 9/11 when the twin towers were struck. But it seems that we don't often recall where we were at big, happier events. I do remember when the first man walked on the moon I was at Gigi Kwasnik's house. If you are old enough to have witnessed that incredible occurrence, you probably remember where you were that day, too.

How many of you could tell me where you were as the moon eclipsed the sun last Monday? That's what I thought. We all have some story to tell. Steve hiked with friends to see the eclipse from the mountains; he had been instructed to bring appropriate food, so he brought sun chips; someone else brought moon pies. Another brought sun dried tomatoes. Abby in Tennessee baked eclipse cookies for the day. Some people took a break from their work places to go outside to see this event. Some schools celebrated by letting children go outside with their special glasses. Emily went outside with two co-workers and the three shared one pair of glasses. Some met new neighbors and re-connected with neighbors they hadn't talked to in years as they took in the eclipse. One of my favorite images was when Ralph was in the line at the library waiting for eclipse glasses – a long line – and as folks waited in line someone took a single pair of glasses and passed them down the line so everyone could see. Many of us felt the temperature drop. Some cicadas got really loud!

I know a *few* folks around here claimed a little disappointment that we didn't have a more dramatic darkening locally but the more dominant voices expressed amazement, majesty and awe. Even on television, to see the Path of Totality as it reached Oregon, and Jackson Hole, Tennessee and South Carolina brought me goose bumps and a lump in my throat! I heard there were plenty of others who laughed and cried, too. For many this was a bonding experience, a building of community. Those who took the time to stop and witness this incredible occurrence experienced a thrilling connectedness, a holy moment.

In our letter to the Romans for today, Paul writes, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think...” Would you say Monday's eclipse was out of this world,? It was a holy experience that took many of us out of ourselves for a couple of minutes and gave us a beautiful and yet

poignant sense of our place in the world. In God's infinitesimal creative genius, we are just a little blip! And yet we are an important blip.

On Wednesday morning I saw my neighbor Barbara who had driven down to South Carolina to be in the Path of Totality. (Who even knew that was a thing until a week ago?) Knowing she had just returned, I asked her "How was it?" "Oh, my God" (and she meant "Oh, my God") it was just fantastic!" Her face looked as if she had seen God and in a sense, she had indeed seen God, or at least part of God's creative work. She said that it had gotten so dark in the middle of that day that she had seen the stars.

The eclipse gave us a glimpse into the holiness of God and God's creation. You know those stars are out there every day even though we don't see them during the day. I wonder if this eclipse is God's invitation for us to allow the renewing of our minds, an invitation to take a break from our normal routines and pay attention to God through the natural world. God's creation can restore us, heal us, renew us. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds."

Like the stars that were visible for some during the day on Monday and yet are always there even when we cannot see them, God is with us when his presence seems obvious and is with us when we don't feel or believe it. Together, as a community of faith, perhaps we can share our spiritual glasses so we can perceive God's presence together, day and night, in troubled times and in the lighter moments?

Amen.