



The transition from Winter to Spring is one which many of us anticipate, hoping for the longer, warmer days to come our way. We look for signs of Spring, from groundhogs who do or do not see their shadows to the first robin in the backyard to being able to eat dinner while the sun still shines. We notice, don't we, when the thermometer hits 50 degrees? Even better, we feel the growing warmth as temperatures enter the 60's. For many who long for Springtime, this part of winter seems the darkest, the dreariest, the most lifeless. It's almost as if Spring never will arrive. Then, in the middle of the cold, gray-brown landscape, we hear the call. At first it sounds soft, faint, distant. Do we really hear it? Then, it grows, louder and louder, until it is unmistakable. In our certainty that we are hearing the call, our eyes look to the skies for confirmation. We look south, and catch sight of the faint, V-shaped movement among the clouds, gliding northward. There it is, the first flock of geese migrating north for the summer season. Even though the day may feel and look like the deepest part of Winter still, as we watch the geese fly above, we know that the season is about to change, and life will be renewed.

I had a teacher in elementary school who offered a dollar (in those days a dollar for an elementary student was a fortune) for the student who first pointed out to him a flock of geese heading north, heralding Spring. He was a science teacher for the upper elementary grades and loved the coming of Spring, wanting to celebrate with his students the natural process taking place above, in the skies, which promised the coming of long days, vibrant plants and flowers and the new life which Spring brings.

I was thinking about my elementary school teacher as I looked out the window this morning and saw the barren trees and ice-filled land. We know that Spring, that life is on the way. Still, we look for signs of its coming and wait in anticipation. Many use this time period to prepare for the coming of Spring, of life, by ordering seeds or planting and growing



seedlings, or making plans for other Springtime activities. Our journey from Epiphany to Lent kind of reminds me of our Winter journey and our looking for signs of life. In the middle of Winter, we celebrate Christmas (even many who do not identify as Christians) and the New Year and spend some time taking part in festivities which make the winter more bearable. Epiphany comes to us in Winter and reminds us of the Jesus who comes to be the light of the world. Through the gospels appointed for the season we get to see the beginning of the ministry of Jesus and his making himself known to the world, always with an ominous darkness lurking in the background. This season transitions into Lent, which is, in many respects, a season which reminds us of winter... dark and foreboding. Lent becomes a season of preparing for what we know is to come and hope is to come, what we expect on the horizon. But, as Jesus turns his face toward Jerusalem, we know what the future holds. In the midst of this, we are reminded of our own mortality ("Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.") and see in the cross our own future. As in winter, we are surrounded by the trappings of lifeless forms and darker days. Even so, as Winter moves along at a glacial pace, we hear the honking fill the skies and know that Spring is on the way. Even so, as we transition to Lent and recognize the fateful turn Jesus has taken, which will lead to the cross, we are met with Transfiguration. On the mountain, in the presence of a few disciples, Jesus transformed into what many scholars consider a foreshadowing of his resurrection form, a foretaste of what is to come. As he climbed back down the mountain and took decisive steps leading to Jerusalem, he was accompanied by disciples who, even though lacking understanding at the time, witnessed the future action of God. We, too, as we transition from Epiphany to Lent, will witness the same. Soon, we will know that the honking of the geese, the first sight of the robin, the first day when light lasts longer than darkness signal the life to come, as does the Transfiguration of our Lord.