

*And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory,  
are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory,  
which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV

The Monarch Butterfly begins its life as an egg, not much bigger than a dot, laid on the leaf of a milkweed plant. In two to three days a caterpillar emerges from the egg, born into the environment of the milkweed. Immediately, the caterpillar begins to live according to its nature and the nature of the caterpillar is to eat; specifically, it consumes its environment. As far as the caterpillar is concerned, the milkweed is its world, made just for him. It provides everything he needs. And boy does he eat it up!

But, deep within the caterpillar is a gnawing that it has a purpose that is not confined to the milkweed plant. As familiar and stable and tasty as the milkweed is, and it is tempting to stay a caterpillar, the caterpillar realizes that it was not made to simply eat milkweed and grow fat. It was made for something much, much more. This caterpillar is destined to fly!

Now, to attain what it is destined for, it must be willing to cease being a caterpillar. It can no longer have the mind of a caterpillar and be limited to the confines of the milkweed leaf. It must be set free from its nature of walking on and consuming a leaf. If it will fly, it must let go of the constraints of a caterpillar. In other words, the caterpillar must die to itself. Only then will it be able to take on wings of flight and submit to the nature of the air. Only when it dies to the nature of being a caterpillar will it be able to be a Monarch Butterfly.

The wonderful thing for the butterfly is that God placed within it all that is necessary for the caterpillar to become a butterfly. At just the right time the caterpillar knows when to stop eating and find a place to cocoon. It attaches itself to the leaf or a branch and soon all we see is the outer casing of a Chrysalis. The Chrysalis provides protection while the metamorphosis, the transformation, from a caterpillar to a beautiful Monarch Butterfly takes place.

You and I are a whole lot like a caterpillar. We were born into the environment of this world; it was made just for us. So, we set ourselves to growing in our world, to becoming all that we can be. Most of what we do causes us to mature in body and mind, in ability and strength, and in attitude and purpose. While we understand that we are part of a greater whole and we may even grasp that what we do will affect others positively or adversely, if we are honest, our primary motivator is self-centered and based on how it affects us and those we love in our environment, in our world.

But, deep within us is a gnawing that we have a purpose that is not confined to this world. As familiar and stable and satisfying, dare I say tasty, as this world is, and it is tempting to function only for this world, deep down we realize we were made for something much, much more. We are destined to live! Just as the caterpillar was destined to be a Monarch Butterfly so you and I are destined to be Monarch children - children of the King.

Here's the best news: the transformation that we require in order that we can attain the purpose that deep down we know we were made for is now possible. We no longer need to be caterpillars

confined to this world and condemned by the law of sin and death. We, too, can be FREE! Paul reminds us that “if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.” Because Jesus lives, you have certainty for today and hope for tomorrow. The certainty for today is that you are a Monarch Child! The hope for tomorrow is that you will be a Monarch child.

I can't help but think that our churches are called to be Monarchs, too. In so many ways, the Covid19 pandemic caused, forced our churches to cocoon. We could no longer be church in the ways we were familiar. For a time, it seemed as if we could do nothing. Then, slowly but deliberately, change began to happen. We found a plethora of ways to worship, share the Good News of God's love, connect with one another, be in ministry to our communities. Sure, from the outside it may seem as if the church is inactive, but inside the church is transforming.

Just as the caterpillar must go of his nature in order for the transformation to begin, so, too, as churches we needed to let go of our known nature so that we could transform. For the caterpillar, a chrysalis becomes a protective barrier in which he transforms into the destiny of the butterfly. Could it be that the pandemic has been our protective barrier so that we could transform? In that chrysalis is God's love transforming us and our churches into the destiny of a Monarch? It is neither easy nor quick; it is a process ... a process of becoming like Jesus, who is the first fruit of all who are set free.

In the not-too-distant future we will break free from our pandemic chrysalis. My prayer is that we will not be like Heimlich the Bavarian caterpillar in the movie “A Bug's Life” who emerged from his chrysalis the same as before but with two little wings that really could do nothing. Heimlich was no different than before. I pray that our Central Bay churches are no different than before. Instead, I pray that we will emerge from the pandemic transformed into Monarchs, able to fly with the Gospel of peace into a world of despair, with the Mission of disciple making that will truly transform others into Monarch children of God, with Ministries that can transform earthly lives and living, and with Hope that is more contagious than covid.

As we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord, know this: because Jesus lives you can have certainty for today and hope for tomorrow. Because Jesus lives you have purpose. Because Jesus lives you can be freed to be a Monarch Child and our churches can be freed to be Monarch Churches!