

Homily based on the readings from July 30, 2025 (Exodus 34.29-35;
Matthew 13.44-46)

As many of you know, for most of the history of the Church – prior to the development of the printing press – books were so expensive that the vast majority of Christians never had the opportunity to learn to read. In fact, many of the paintings, statues, and stained-glass windows in our churches were originally designed to compensate for this situation. The way people learned the stories of the Bible was from oral tradition, reinforced by the artwork in their parishes.

One striking example of this phenomenon, throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, was the representation of the *radiance* of Moses as he descended from Mount Sinai. Although many images of Moses focused on different moments of his life, this event – as described in today’s first reading – was one of the most frequently depicted. Until the nineteenth century, it was common to portray Moses with two luminous rays emanating from his head – which sometimes even

resembled horns. In fact, there is a window at St. Joseph's in New London that contains just such an image.

Since the advent of universal literacy, our society has become much more *verbal* and much less *visual*. As a result, the image of Moses *radiating* the glory of God has become less prominent in our collective consciousness. Nevertheless, from a theological perspective, it is just as important as it has *ever* been. The fact *is* that being in the presence of God *changes* us. In some cases, that change may actually be visible; shortly before his martyrdom, for example, the face of Saint Stephen was described as being “like the face of an angel.” Even if the change is more subtle, once we encounter the living God – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – we cannot remain the same as we were before.

The question that each of us needs to consider is whether such a change is perceptible in *us*. What *matters*, of course, is not what the *world* can see, but the reality within our souls that only God can fully perceive.

Being a Christian is not supposed to be a static experience. Every day

we walk with Christ is an *opportunity* to grow closer to the Lord. If nothing about us is actually changing, then we are not allowing the light of Christ to penetrate the shadows of our heart.

So, as we leave Mass today, we may not be *physically* glowing with the radiance of the Lord – even if we are glistening slightly with perspiration. Nevertheless, in a few moments, we will *all* have the *incomparable* opportunity to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of Mass – to receive the fullness of Christ’s Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. We should *not* be the same people when we exit the church as we were when we arrived. On most days, the change may be so small that we can barely recognize it, but in the *depths* of our hearts we know that God is drawing us inexorably toward himself. This *incredible* privilege is not limited to Moses, or to the patriarchs and prophets of old, but is freely available to *anyone* who has the *courage* and the *humility* to bow down before the presence of Our Risen Lord and Savior.