

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2022          Transfiguration Sunday**

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.  
God is ever present, around us and within us,  
we worship together in God.

A reflective Reading of Luke 9: 28-36

<sup>28</sup>Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.

It was a hot day, the ground was dusty and as they walked they scattered small stones which tumbled down the hillside. It was a steep climb but Jesus did not stop, just climbed on and up, gently, evenly and they followed, right to the top.

<sup>29</sup>And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.

The climb and the heat had made them drowsy, but they had stayed awake and as they watched Jesus changed. They rubbed their eyes and looked at one another, then looked back at Jesus. They stood transfixed.

The glory of the Lord was shining all around; he burnt with Holy fire, with splendour he was crowned, an awesome sight, a radiant King of light.

<sup>30</sup>Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him.

<sup>31</sup>They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup>Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

<sup>33</sup>Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" —not knowing what he said.

Two figures, they had never seen them before and yet they knew – Moses and Elijah. And one of them, in sheer excitement at the moment suggests they stay there for it is good. He wants to put up shelters but...

<sup>34</sup>While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup>Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

A cloud, a bright cloud moves overhead, blocking out the sun, the light is gone but Jesus still burns brightly. A voice, not his voice, echoes through them...

For the presence of the Lord, the Holy One was there. They bowed before him, faces to the ground, reverent and fearful. They were in the presence of the Holy One, standing on Holy ground

<sup>36</sup>When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

They opened their eyes and slowly, still shaking, they lifted their heads...

Jesus, as they saw him everyday, alone, no Moses, no Elijah, no cloud, no voice. Jesus their friend. Jesus who cleansed and healed. Jesus who worked tirelessly, always gracious to others. They saw Jesus, only Jesus. Slowly and gently Jesus gathered them, and the small group, the same and yet somehow changed, walked slowly down the mountain.

**Reading** Exodus 34: 29-35

2 Peter 1:16-19

**Story** The Very Hungry Caterpillar ([Listen here](#))

### Reflection

Do you have a special place you go to feel closer to God? George McLeod, founder of the Iona Community referred to Iona as a 'thin' place, somewhere where heaven touch earth. I found a 'thin' place in Gloucestershire on top of Rodborough Common, the peak of one of the hills which form the five valleys around Stroud. It is a wild unspoilt place which even has an ice cream factory, pure heaven. George Whitfield, the inspiration for many churches in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, on visiting the area remarked that if this was heaven's footstool, he could not wait to see heaven.

Our readings today all have one thing in common, they describe or relate to a mountain top experience of God. For Moses it was Mount Sinai, which he climbed to receive wisdom, and the ten words of wisdom from God, for Peter it was mountain top experience to blow the mind and it stayed with him.

When Moses spoke with God on top of Mount Sinaia he was changed by the experience, and we are told his face radiated light. Moses was at first unaware of this and it was only the frightened faces of the Israelites when he descended the mountain that alerted him to this change. His response was to wear a veil in between relating God's message and his next visit to God on the mountain top.

Now, our understanding of God has changed, and most of us no longer confine God to a specific place, be it mountain top or 'temple', instead we believe God is everywhere and that we are always in the presence of God. We are also, always wearing veils, or perhaps layers or masks behind which we hide our real self. Moses took off the vail in God's presence and we also should be our true self in God's presence. Of course, God sees beyond the masks and layers, but if we do not consciously remove them then they can act as a filter to what we hear. There is something important about being true to self.

If we do not regularly remove the layers and masks, we can forget we are wearing them and forget who we really are. Masks and Layers are a bit like those Russian dolls, and they can hide the true self in the middle. Some masks are thrust upon us, we have no control over being an auntie or uncle, or a grandparent, or a sister or brother. Sometimes we choose a layer such as being married, which for a woman has traditionally meant changing your name, or a professional qualification which adds a layer, or a vocation such as teacher or nurse and we become known by that identity but deep within we are the soul which inhabits a physical presence without layers and masks. This is the core of our being and who we should be when we meet God. Now you will have noticed that if God is everywhere we are constantly meeting God and so we are called to be ourselves before all these masks and layers, we are called to be true to the image of God within us in all we do and present a face to the world glowing with the love of God.

In our second reading Peter refers to his experience on the mountain top when he saw Jesus transfigured. It must have been a life changing experience, although the full effect took a while. I wonder if the faces of Peter, James and John glowed after their experience on the mountain top, we are not told if they did, but maybe they seemed different in some way to the other disciples. I wonder if the Pentecost experience when others saw lights above the disciple's heads was a

transfiguration experience. Certainly, after that Peter's confidence grew, and we read of his adventures and his passion for the gospel message of Jesus.

Do we allow our experience of God to change us and build our confidence, or do we hurriedly reapply the mask to hide away once again? Change often takes time, it did for Peter, and it did for Moses and so many others we read of in Scripture, but an awareness of God's presence should change us. We are to be lamps in the darkness, radiance again, and we are not to hide our light under a bushel for then loses its purpose. So, how can we become a brighter light, we do it by absorbing more and more of the message of Jesus, studying and wrestling with what it means to walk that way of Jesus. The hungry caterpillar knew deep within that he was meant to be different, to be transform, or be transfigured, into his true self, a butterfly free to fly in the love that is God. Becoming his true self was an all-consuming need. Deep down we know we are called to be the people of God, light and love in the darkness of fear, and we should be doing what it takes to become our true self and make a difference in the lives of others. We should be feeding on the Spirit until we shine with love.

Think back to our prayer earlier, to be in God's presence means:

- Recognising That God is everywhere and everywhere is holy, a place of joy, truth, and hope, we belong everywhere because God is everywhere.
- Recognising when we hide ourselves and having the courage to reveal our true self by facing the light and the love which is stronger than anything else we can experience.
- Listening for the words of challenge and encouragement which feed us and the words of forgiveness and love which hold us
- Allowing our imagination to feed us and free us to be our true selves.

To be in God's presence is to glow with God's love. We are called to light for the world by being light for our neighbours and friends and family. We can start in our special place, but we are called to realise that God is everywhere, and special places are all around. We are to become butterflies.