

13<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Friends,

I hope once again that this letter finds you safe and well, and I wonder what kind of week you have had, as I write the snow is still on the ground here having fallen earlier in the week, and there are some rather spectacular icicles to be seen. I don't know if you like snow, I love it, well I love it for a while, though I must admit that I am less fond of it as it starts to disappear and gets rather messy. I find fresh snowfall magical though, waking to a world transformed and sparkling white is rather breathtaking! Snow lined branches give a whole new quality to winter trees.

We will of course see transformation in a different way over the next month or so as winter turns to spring, new leaves begin to bud and bulbs push through the earth and begin to flower. Transformation is often a theme that we find in Scripture, maybe particularly in the Gospels as people encounter the person of Jesus and their lives are transformed, for some it is an encounter with a love that accepts them as they are, for others healing, the blind see, the lame walk, the dead are raised (think of Jairus daughter, the man from Nain, or Lazarus) and the grief of their families is transformed into great rejoicing! To be transformed is a powerful thing, it might mean a change of attitude towards a particular issue, or even a new way of seeing yourself that enables you to live differently, to flourish.

Transformation is powerful, it is about change, and often complete change. It is a word sometimes used about this weeks Gospel reading, but I believe that we would be wrong to use that word, this week, as we move towards the season of Lent, we are invited, along with Peter, James and John to see Jesus differently, as he is transfigured, not transformed, before them. Jesus has been travelling with the disciples, his mind is now upon the journey to Jerusalem, today's passage follows the feeding of the 4,000, the healing of a blind man in Bethsaida, and Peter's declaration the Jesus is The Christ, the long hoped for Messiah, followed quite quickly by his attempt to stop Jesus speaking of his coming suffering and death. Let's face it, all of this was a lot for the disciples to take in, and I am sure that Peter voiced what others were thinking! It was with all of this in the background then that sets the scene for what now follows:

*<sup>2</sup> Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one<sup>[b]</sup> on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,<sup>[c]</sup> one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' <sup>6</sup> He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved;<sup>[d]</sup> listen to him!' <sup>8</sup> Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.*

*<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean. ( Mark 9: 2-9)*

I wonder what you would have made of this experience, Peter is first to speak as usual, trying to capture and contain what he sees, declaring it "good to be here", and yet at the same time babbling away because he was terrified, and probably rightly so, the Jesus they shared their day to day life with, was not only a miracle working healer, a wise teacher, but now suddenly glowing with all divine possibilities, perhaps for the first time they were seeing who he truly was, the veil of humanity had been lifted away and the divine shone through, and yet in human form. All the possibilities of God in flesh were revealed on the mountain side, and if that weren't enough he was joined by Moses and Elijah, it is interesting that the disciples did not need to ask who they were!

How do you respond to this reading, to this story of transfiguration, this unveiling, this revealing encounter, and when might we experience such awe-filled wonder? Maybe it is in a glimpse of glory in nature, maybe in the sudden epiphany/ penny dropping moment as a scripture we have long grappled with becomes clear in a new way, maybe through music or art, or an encounter with another, the veil is drawn back and what is, is seen! I like to think that the whole world is charged with divine energy and potential, on that day the disciples simply saw what was, Jesus, in human form transfigured, revealing his true nature.

What then does this mean for us? We could look back to Moses encounter with God on a different mountainside, where he needed to cover his face with a veil so as not to dazzle the Israelites (Exodus 34), or maybe we could look forward to the vision of the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21), or maybe we could begin to look for divine potential and possibilities present and active within and around us. I like one of the mission statements of the Northumbria Community, who state that they look for where God is at work and go to join in, that may require us to adopt an active awareness, an openness to finding God at work in the unlikely and the unusual. So I wonder, where have you encountered the divine at work, either within you, in your community or in the world? I had the joy of hearing a young couple's delight on seeing their baby on an early scan this week, the amazingness of new life, the wonder of tiny fingers, and the potential held in all of that full of fragile possibility. As I write I am watching the sunrise, and am pondering how many centuries the sun has risen, and how many wonders, and horrors have been blessed by a new day, the words of Mother Julian of Norwich come to mind again, "All will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of things will be well." As you ponder that I offer you the words of a hymn:

*Jesus calls us here to meet him  
as, through word and song and prayer,  
we affirm God's promised presence  
where his people live and care.  
Praise the God who keeps his promise;  
praise the Son who calls us friends;  
praise the Spirit who, among us,  
to our hopes and fears attends.*

*Jesus calls us to confess him  
Word of life and Lord of all,  
sharer of our flesh and frailness,  
serving all who fail or fall.  
Tell his holy human story;  
tell his tales that all may hear;  
tell the world the Christ in glory  
came to earth to meet us here.*

*Jesus calls us to each other,  
vastly different though we are;  
creed and colour, class and gender  
neither limit nor debar.  
Join the hand of friend and stranger;  
join the hands of age and youth;  
join the faithful and the doubter  
in their common search for truth.*

*Jesus calls us to his table  
rooted firm in time and space,  
where the Church in earth and heaven  
finds a common meeting place.  
Share the bread and wine, his body;  
share the love of which we sing;  
share the feast for saints and sinners  
hosted by our Lord and King*

Jesus calls us here to meet him. If you were on the mountainside with Peter, James and John today how might you respond to the words of the voice from the cloud “This is my beloved Son, listen to him?”

With that I pray that you will find many blessings as you go into this week, that you will encounter the presence and activity of God in your life and in the world around you. As always, if you would like to talk, need a chat please call me. You remain in my prayers.



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Sunset at Redmires