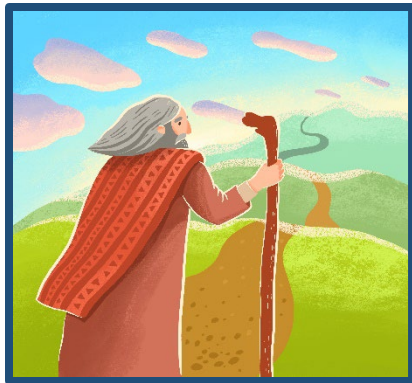


## REFLECTIONS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT ~ 05 March 2023

### The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

Inclusion, affirmation, and encouragement – these themes threaded through the readings in the Liturgy of the Word today seem a little strange for a Lenten Sunday. Yet we are reminded of the words of the Lutheran pastor, David Lose, “Jesus did not die on the cross in order that we might be acceptable or to make God loving. Rather, Jesus died to show us that God already loves us and has declared that we are not just acceptable but also treasured, priceless beyond measure. . . You are enough.” Our readings speak strongly to us that we, you and I, are treasured and held priceless by our God who constantly assures us that we are enough.

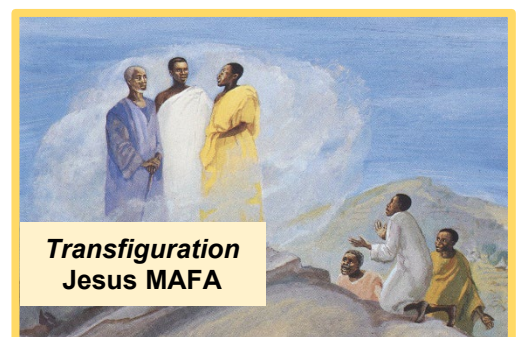


In our first reading from the book of Genesis, we are given a brief glimpse of God's offer of covenant with Abram (later to be re-named Abraham) who was then seventy-five years old. Remember that in this time the average life span was forty years. Abram was an old man. The offer of the covenant is so important that it will be repeated three times in chapters 12, 15 and 17 of Genesis. The words God uses here are daunting for a younger person let alone an old man and his elderly wife Sarai, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing” (Gen 12:1-2). Abraham and Sarah will die before this blessing is realized. The Jesuit, John Kavanaugh, says so succinctly, “Abraham and Sarah, our parents in faith, remind us that it is not so much a matter of when this life's journey ends, as it is a matter of where the great hike of hope takes us.” Today, three world religions trace their beginnings to this promise – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

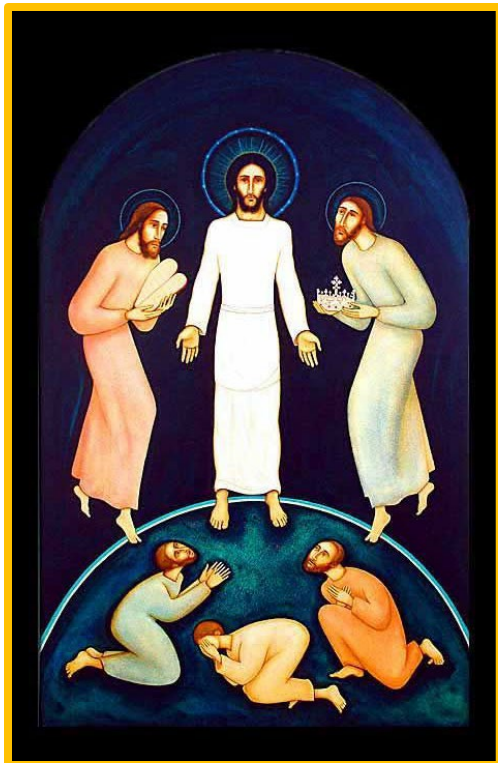
Psalms 33 describes the qualities of the God who makes this covenant with Abraham and Sarah and their descendants: upright, faithful, righteous, just, steadfastly loving. The people singing the psalm are confident that this God will “deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine” (Ps 33:19). Their constant plea is, “Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you” (Ps 33:22).

In the letter to Timothy, the writer reminds those who suffer for the Gospel that this God has “saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works but according to God's own purpose and grace” (2 Tim 1:9). We do not have to prove ourselves worthy of receiving this calling; it is always there. We are given the free choice to accept or reject it. As Lose said, God is always holding us “treasured and priceless beyond measure.”

The Transfiguration story is told today from Matthew's Gospel (it is also recounted in Mark and Luke) in the midst of Jesus' public ministry. It happens on a mountain, not an insignificant detail given that Matthew's community is Jewish Christian. They would immediately make a connection with the mountain as one of the preferred meeting place between God and the people. It is the place where we can best see heaven touch earth! It was during Moses' meeting with God on Mount Sinai that the



***The Transfiguration***  
**Michael O'Brien (Canada)**



covenant was made between God and the People of Israel. Matthew will also recount the words of Jesus on the Mount of Beatitudes, early in his ministry, when he deepens our understanding of the Law, the Torah of Moses, flowing from Sinai. And at the moment of his ending his public ministry on this earth, Jesus calls the disciples to another mountain, one in Galilee, where he gives them their mission and the confidence to carry out that mission, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20).

Today’s narrative describes one of three moments of “transfiguration” in Jesus’ life. The first is at his baptism, at the beginning of his public ministry, when God speaks from the heavens, saying, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17). At today’s Transfiguration scene in the midst of his public ministry, God again speaks from the heavens, repeating the same words but adding to them, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” (Matt

17:5). Jesus’ third transfiguration is at the Resurrection which comes after several references to Jesus’ condemnation because he claimed to be the Son of God.

While there is much to be gleaned from this story of the transfiguration, let us explore three ways in which transfiguration is part of our lives today as it was part of Jesus’ life when he walked on earth.

***We, too, meet God at the mountain*** – while we know that God is present in our hearts, in our communities, and in Earth’s very being, we have moments when God seems especially present to us. Like Jesus’ experience, these moments of awareness are life-changing for us. For Jesus, they came at the beginning of his public ministry, in the midst of his ministry when he doubted that he was on the right path, and at the end of his time on this earth. Veronica Lawson rsm tells us, “Wilderness and mountain remind us that God’s creation is the locus of wonder and mystery. The world we inhabit has an integrity of its own. It is, in a very real sense, God’s dwelling place. It is, in addition, the place of human-divine encounter and the place of human encounter with the other-than-human material world. Attention to habitat can lead us to a clearer understanding of our own place in the scheme of things and to ever deeper understandings of our relationship with God.”

Pope Francis echoes the words, “We too are called to climb up the mountain, to contemplate the beauty of the Risen One that enkindles glimmers of light in every fragment of our life and helps us to interpret history beginning with the paschal victory.” The Anglican pastor, Wim Kuiper, adds, “We are asked to ‘climb the mountain’, go to an edge place, whatever that may mean for you. To take time for prayer, to go into silence, to come to church or literally to climb a mountain, even if you have to leave our flat country for doing so. Discovering such personal ‘edge places’ can help us to become open for the Lord to reveal Himself to us. It is when we recognise those ‘incarnation

moments' – occasions when God's abundance touches our own lives – that we can enter into a more splendid and transfigured life."

***We, too, have many moments of transfiguration*** – the spiritual writer, Steve Garnaas-Holmes, describes so beautifully the moments of transfiguration that are ours. Note and trust his words and see in yourself these times when "you are dazzling, radiant with newborn light":

The disciples were having no strange vision,  
nor the evangelist concocting a tableau  
for the delight of Renaissance painters.  
It was simply this: for a moment  
Jesus' friends were seeing truly,  
seeing him as he was,  
seeing a human being as we all truly are,  
shining with the whole glory of Creation,  
stardust that we are.  
They saw through the scruff and dirt  
that this rough world leaves on us,  
saw past the judgments and appearances,  
the masks and costumes and shrouds  
that we throw on each other:  
they saw the heaven within a person,  
the image of God.  
If only they hadn't been so shocked  
they would have noticed it in themselves.  
Jesus had to tell them later:  
"You are light for the world."  
God shines in you,  
gleams with the splendid light of heaven.  
Beyond any smudge this world can put on you,  
or any human word or deed can remove,  
you are dazzling, radiant with newborn light.  
Right now, sitting there reading this,  
you breathe God's light in and out.  
Your nerves spark with life.  
Your eyes light up the world.  
Let this light fill you, the fire of God.  
Be mindful of this radiance.  
Look for the light in all whom you meet.  
Trust the light. Give thanks for the light.  
Even in your sleep, the light closes its eye,  
but breathes deeply, calmly, faithfully.



***Transfiguration of Jesus***

Armando Alemdar Ara

[CC 3.0](#)

***We, too, cannot remain on the mountain*** – Pope Francis echoes Jesus' words to the disciples when he reminds us that we cannot stay on the mountain, "We cannot remain on the mountain and enjoy the bliss of this encounter on our own. Jesus himself brings us back to the valley, among our brothers and sisters and into daily life." The spiritual writer, Jan Richardson, describes the temptation to stay on the mountain and the need to return:



Believe me, I know how tempting it is  
to remain inside this blessing,  
to linger where everything is dazzling and clear.

We could build walls around this blessing, put a roof over it.

We could bring in a table, chairs, have the most amazing meals.

We could make a home. We could stay.

But this blessing is built for leaving.

This blessing is made for coming down the mountain.

This blessing wants to be in motion,  
to travel with you as you return to level ground.

It will seem strange how quiet this blessing becomes  
when it returns to earth. It is not shy. It is not afraid.

It simply knows how to bide its time, to watch and wait, to discern and pray  
until the moment comes when it will reveal everything it knows,  
when it will shine forth with all that it has seen,  
when it will dazzle with the unforgettable light  
you have carried all this way.

We must have the experience of transfiguration, of transforming awareness, to have the courage  
to continue our journey. We must leave these moments of transfiguration to return to our ordinary  
God-touched lives in order to be light and blessing for each other and for Earth. How wondrous  
our God is to give us such joy, such hope, and such confidence! Let each one of trust that we are  
enough!



***Transfiguration***

Charles Blakeman