



Encountering Christ
*Prayerfully preparing for the
Sunday Mass and praying in
particular for our school families*



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 6th August 2023 - The Transfiguration of the Lord

1 **Relax & Remember**

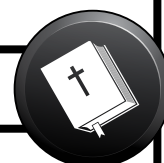
Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 **Read**

Taken from the Gospel for Sunday 6th August 2023 - The Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9)

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone. There in their presence he was transfigured; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.' When they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them. 'Stand up,' he said. 'Do not be afraid.' And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but only Jesus. As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order. 'Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.'



3 **Reflect**

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

Mark's was the first Gospel to be written; he gives the basic account which Matthew and Luke both use. This commentary looks first at Mark, then at the changes made by Matthew and Luke. Mark's Gospel has been described as 'a Passion Narrative with extended introduction.' In this second half of the Gospel, everything is overshadowed by the Passion of Jesus. The disciples are going to be stunned and shaken by the Passion, when their loved and awesome leader is taken from them and tortured to a humiliating death. So beforehand God allows them to see the other side, to see Jesus for what he really is. They see his features as a heavenly person, transformed with the divine light and clothed in dazzling garments. With him are the two heavenly figures who had experience of God on the Holy Mountain, Moses and Elijah, for this is an experience of Jesus as God. The overshadowing cloud is further evidence of the divine presence. The Voice that spoke to Jesus at his baptism now speaks to them all, authenticating Jesus as God's Son and chosen teacher. The disciples are literally 'gob stopped', and want to preserve the experience by building three shelters for the heavenly visions. But such an experience, like any mystical experience of the divine, is not to last. They must return to the business of living their daily lives in the light of this overwhelming experience. Matthew's account is almost the same as Mark's. He adds the detail of Jesus' face shining like the sun. This was the case with Moses when he encountered God on the Holy Mountain, and Matthew, writing for Jewish Christians, is always keen to stress that Jesus was a Second Moses. He also changes the reaction of the disciples: in Mark, they are so scared that they do not know what to say, but in Matthew, they fall to the ground and do reverence, and Jesus gently raises them up. Luke stresses that Jesus went up the mountain to pray. He frequently stresses Jesus' constant need for prayer, and many of Luke's parables are about prayer (the Importunate Widow and the Unjust Judge, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector). Luke also details that Jesus, Moses and Elijah were conversing about his journey up to Jerusalem, a journey that is the theme of the latter half of Luke's gospel.

Jesus went up the Holy Mountain to pray. Where do you like to pray? What do you find the best form of prayer?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 **Respond & Request**

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 6th August 2023



First Reading: *One Like a Son of Man*

Daniel 7:9-10. 13-14

As I watched: Thrones were set in place and one of great age took his seat. His robe was white as snow, the hair of his head as pure as wool. His throne was a blaze of flames, its wheels were a burning fire. A stream of fire poured out, issuing from his presence. A thousand thousand waited on him, ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. A court was held and the books were opened. I gazed into the visions of the night. And I saw, coming on the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man. He came to the one of great age and was led into his presence. On him was conferred sovereignty, glory and kingship, and men of all peoples, nations and languages became his servants. His sovereignty is an eternal sovereignty which shall never pass away, nor will his empire ever be destroyed.

This prophecy of Daniel was written in the dark days of the Syrian persecution of Judaism a couple of centuries before Christ. First, the evil empires that persecuted Judaism are described under the imagery of ravening beasts, tearing their prey to pieces. Then comes this altogether different image of a noble human being on whom God confers all power and sovereignty on earth. In the original vision, this human figure is the personification of the Jews, 'the holy ones of the Most High', who will be freed from this persecution and exalted to glory. In the New Testament, this prophecy is applied to Jesus. In the trial before the High Priest, he will claim this exalted position as his own, saying, 'You will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of the Father and coming on the clouds of heaven.' The High Priest recognizes this as a divine claim and cries out, 'Blasphemy!' This title, and the claim to share the Father's throne, are indeed claims to divinity. It gives sense to Jesus' other claims to divine power, the power to forgive sins and to complete the Law. In this power, he sends out his apostles to teach and baptize all nations.

What does Jesus mean by calling himself 'son of man'?

Second Reading: *Peter's Witness to the Transfiguration*

Second letter of St Peter 1:16-19

It was not any cleverly invented myths that we were repeating when we brought you the knowledge of the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; we had seen his majesty for ourselves. He was honoured and glorified by God the Father, when the Sublime Glory itself spoke to him and said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour.' We heard this ourselves, spoken from heaven, when we were with him on the holy mountain.

So we have confirmation of what was said in prophecies; and you will be right to depend on prophecy and take it as a lamp for lighting a way through the dark until the dawn comes and the morning star rises in your minds.

“As the Beloved Son of God,
Jesus shares the same glory.”

In fact, the Second Letter of Peter was probably written not by Peter but by an unknown author, writing in Peter's name and with his authority. For the author, the event of the Transfiguration takes a central place in spirituality, 'as a lamp shining in a dark place', providing a confirmation of the prophetic message and an inspiration until the dawning of the final day. The description of the place as 'the Holy Mountain' is a reminder that we do not know where it took place, but that, wherever it occurred, it is a parallel to the appearance of God on the Holy Mountain of Sinai, which was the occasion and basis of the choice of Israel to be God's People. There Jesus was honoured with glory conveyed to him by 'the Majestic Glory'. In the Bible, 'glory' is properly a divine property. It is an awesome term, for glory belongs to God alone, although 'heaven and earth are full of his glory', as the angels sing in Isaiah's vision of God in the Temple (Isaiah 6.3). As the Beloved Son of God, Jesus shares the same glory. It was, therefore, for the chosen disciples who witnessed it, an experience of the divinity of Jesus.

Is it possible to experience in any way the glory of God in creation?

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*

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