

## TRANSCENDING THE ORDINARY

Let's go up the mountain.  
Let's go up to the place where the land meets the sky  
where the earth touches the heavens,  
to the place of meeting,  
to the place of mists,  
to the place of voices and conversations,  
to the place of listening.

This season of Epiphany celebrates the transforming, transfiguring power of God's glory. In today's Gospel we see that the glory that had been hinted at and glimpsed occasionally during Jesus' life was revealed to Peter, James and John.

The story of the Bible is one of increasing inclusion. In Exodus, Moses goes alone to the top of a high mountain to receive the Ten Commandments and to encounter the glory of God that settled on the mountain for six days. In Matthew, three disciples go to the top of a high mountain where they encounter Jesus, transfigured and glorious.

This transfiguration is God's turning point. In each of the first three gospels after, Jesus predicts his death, God confirms in a vision Jesus' decision to obey his Father.

As Jesus is transfigured in clothing 'white like light', a symbol that fuses martyrdom and divinity, a bright cloud overshadows him, Moses and Elijah. Through it God says, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!'

I love the story of Moses meeting God. He begs God to show him the way. God says, 'My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.' God doesn't say, 'With my presence you'll have all and more to do.' No – God provides the gift of rest: the gift of seeing Moses through until the end of his life. God tells him that he shall experience that presence, but not face to face for God's glory is utterly consuming. Then our good and kind God says, 'There is a place beside me where you'll be safe. I will put you in the cleft of a rock and cover you with my hand.'

There are times in our lives when we know the presence of God. There are times when we have experienced what we are to do or say. I recall, with clarity, the time when I knew that I should sell my house in Adelaide and come to live here. And it has turned out to be a blessing par excellence.

One of the purposes of the Transfiguration was so that the inner circle of his disciples could gain a greater understanding of who Jesus really was. Christ underwent a dramatic change in appearance in order that the disciples could behold him in his glory. Even though they could not fully comprehend it, they were given the reassurance they needed after hearing the shocking news of his coming death.

Symbolically, the appearance of Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets. But God's voice from heaven – 'listen to him! – clearly showed that the Law and the Prophets must give way to Jesus.

The disciples never forgot what happened that day on the mountain. John wrote in his gospel, 'We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only... Jesus' own face shone like the sun and his clothes were illuminated.

Don't we relate to Peter's immediate response?  
'Master this is a great moment! What would you think if I built three memorials here on the mountain – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah?' It's the sort of thing we'd say, 'Let's make this event permanent.'

While he babbled on God didn't strike him dumb but empowered the radiant cloud to envelop them too. Then he spoke, 'This is my Son, marked by my love, focus of my delight. Listen to him.'

When the disciples heard this they fell flat on their faces, scared to death. But Jesus came over and touched them. 'Don't be afraid.' When they opened their eyes and looked around all they saw was Jesus, only Jesus.

Let us pray...

O God,  
we open our eyes and we see Jesus,  
the months of ministry transfigured to a beam of light,  
the light of the world,  
your light.  
May your light shine upon us.

We open our eyes and we see Moses and Elijah,  
your word restoring us, showing us the way,  
telling a story,  
your story, his story, our story.  
May your word speak to us.  
We open our eyes and see Jesus,  
not casting us off, but leading us out  
to ministry, to people.  
Your love endures forever.

We open our ears and we hear your voice,  
'this is my beloved Son, listen to him!'

And we give you thanks. AMEN

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