

## LOCKDOWN DAY 133 – 6 AUGUST

### The Transfiguration of our Lord

Molweni dear family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture: Luke 9:28-36

Hymn: *'Tis good, Lord, to be here*

Luke is a conscientious storyteller, scrupulous with his dates and history, but at the same time he shows the most delicate skill in weaving together the believable and unbelievable, the real and seemingly unreal. In this, he displays something of the film director's touch. With its virgin birth, miracles and resurrection, the Christian story is full of unbelievable things and unlike the film director, who simply has to make that which is untrue believable, the greatest and most difficult task of every Christian is to convince others – and even ourselves sometimes – that the unbelievable is true.

And this is what the **transfiguration** is all about. It comes at a vital turning point in Luke's gospel. Jesus has just ended his relatively popular ministry in Galilee and is about to start a journey to Jerusalem and death. Peter has just declared that he believes that Jesus is the Messiah and Jesus has begun to explain to his disciples that messiahship means betrayal and death, not glory and fame.

And it is at this crucial point of Jesus' ministry that he and three of his disciples go up the mountain to pray. While he is praying, Luke says, his appearance is altered, and his clothes become a dazzling white. No wonder the disciples don't seem to know whether they are awake or asleep, and they keep quiet about it afterwards. It is almost too strange to believe; like a little bit of Narnia in the middle of a documentary. Its purpose, though, is to clarify Jesus' identity and to cement his credentials for the task ahead. The presence of Moses and Elijah on the mountaintop – Moses as the greatest lawgiver in the history of the people of God, and Elijah the greatest of the prophets – shows that Jesus is much, much more than a Galilean carpenter with a way with words and a healing touch. Jesus is the fulfilment of all the Law and the Prophets; the long awaited Messiah.

And as if to seal this point, a strange cloud descends upon the assembled group. In the Bible, clouds such as this mean one thing – the terrifying presence of God. It is meant to remind the reader of the giving of the Commandments in the Old Testament, when just such a cloud descended on the mountaintop, and the glory of the Lord *"was like a consuming fire."* Jesus represents a new Law, a new commandment, anointed by God himself for the task.

As true Christians, we too have to be **transfigured** through the Word of God, through the sacraments and through our daily Christian living. I refer you to paragraph 82 in our Catechism on page 434 of An Anglican Prayer Book to remind ourselves **"What is the duty of all Christians?"** As the clumsy caterpillar is transformed into a lovely butterfly, so we must be transformed from children of the world into citizens of heaven. St Paul exhorts us, "Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by the complete change of your mind" (Rom 12:2).

As we have gone through the journey of Covid-19 thus far and are moving towards the flattening of the curve, we have been confronted with some of the most faith-stretching parts of the Christian story. We have stood at the foot of the cross and in front of the tomb, reflecting deeply what they mean. Faith is seldom a question of lining up the facts and making a cold-hearted decision. Christianity asks us to believe the most unbelievable things, and therefore a little bit of hot-headed passion – even imagination – is required. Not the kind of imagination which makes the untrue believable, but that which makes the unbelievable true.

God has called us in Christ to be God's children. Covid 19 has stretched our faith and has involved suffering and sacrifice for many. But that little glimpse of heaven which we have in the **Transfiguration** of the Lord gives us hope and encouragement. A glimpse of heaven comforts and cheers. While we

work with the grace of God for our **transfiguration**, the joy and glory of belonging to God must be manifested in our lives. Writing to the Corinthians, St Paul says, “We all, with unveiled faces beholding the glory of the Lord are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). At the same time we should also work for the **transfiguration** of our brothers and sisters around us. We pray deeply against the unacceptable and shameful Covid-19 corruption. God bless Africa!

What are the first steps that you must take in order to be transformed on earth – maybe to be transformed from being proud to humble, from unloving to loving, from selfish to generous. We have had glimpses of experiencing the glory of Christ already here on earth. Heaven will be only the eternal and more perfect experience of the same joy and glory. Here we wait for what is perfect; there we shall be satisfied. We are all sinners in some degree or other. We should leave the path of sin, turn to God, and let ourselves be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ through God’s grace working in us.

Luke wants us to comprehend the breadth of Jesus’ identity: to see who Jesus really is, and what he means for each of us. However rational and level-headed we are, we all have those moments when God asks us to declare our faith in God’s impossible story. Let’s pray for God’s gift of passion and imagination so that when that moment comes we will be able to respond with words of wonder and worship.

As it is National Women’s Day on Monday, I encourage you to please **reach out** to a woman of strength in your life. We continue to work to realize Women’s Rights and Equality.

I close with a prayer written by Ignacio Larranaga:

Lord, we are together again. Together you and I, and you my brothers and sisters. Your life has entered my life.

My history is so trite, so empty, so common. I do not even have a history.

Sometimes I wonder if my life has any meaning. So much emptiness, so many complications, so much unfaithfulness!

But when I am with you, it is as if enthusiasm and energy come back to life.

And today with my brothers Peter, James and John, I saw your face transfigured, glowing.

You, Lord Jesus, are the God of all light. You are the God of brightness and beauty.

It is good to be close to you, it is good to live with you. But Lord, it is even better to know that you are with me throughout my life, by your grace, by your love. It is good to know, as you transform me, that my face will also be transfigured, glowing.

Freely, cheerfully, with joy I beseech you that I may be more and more identified with you, to the point of saying, with the apostles, *‘It is good, Lord, to be here.’* **Amen**

Please listen to **The Song of the Church** on the clip sent to you. You can follow it on page 47 of An Anglican Prayer Book.

I am, Because We Are, Because God is .....Opening hearts to heal God’s world. *God wills our good.*