

Transfiguration

Last Sunday after the Epiphany

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Today is the last Sunday of the Epiphany season. Epiphany is from the Greek, Epi - Phanos; Epi - out Phanos - to manifest or appear. Epiphany - Revelation. As we finish this season, it is appropriate to consider one of Jesus' important revelations of himself. On this day, as we prepare for the season of Lent, we take time to think about the transfiguration. On the occasion that we remember today, we have Jesus revealing his true nature to his three closest disciples.

The transfiguration cannot be seen in isolation. Jesus had assembled his band of followers, and they travelled about Galilee with him as he taught, fed the hungry and healed the sick. After a while, he began to ask his disciples about his identity, and Peter makes the first confession of faith, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. From this time on, Jesus began to show his disciples the ultimate end of his ministry - He spoke about His death and resurrection.

Our gospel this morning invites us to join James, John and Peter as they travelled up to a high mountain with Jesus to pray. Here, we see Jesus in a new and different way with them. No longer the man, in the simple homespun garments. He is somehow brighter and whiter, radiant, dazzling, and we are drawn into another world - another dimension. Here, Moses and Elijah are drawn to him from the past - time seems to have stood still or has no meaning; we cannot be sure.

We are face to face with what is beyond earthly reality, yet it seems more real, and like Peter, we struggle to come to terms with what is happening. In the transfiguration, the disciples accompanying Jesus saw beyond the physical world. Jesus revealed the beauty and glory hidden in his earthly, mortal being. It is as if on the mountain, Peter, James, and John were able to see him at his full potential.

This reminds me of when I heard a sculptor speaking of his work. Rather than taking credit for his work, he explained that the sculpture was itself within the rock, and all he did through his work was to release the beauty within. His skill as a sculptor was in recognising the potential hidden from the eyes of others.

Similarly, the transfiguration conveys this idea of hidden potential. We are encouraged to look within the stone to see the sculpture - within the man Jesus to see the divine Christ.

Today then, as you and I contemplate the transfiguration, let us think about this concept of the hidden being revealed.

Now, why is this important?

Why is it important to reflect on these events?

Perhaps it is this very concept that is important for the church today. I know that as an idealist - when I was much younger, it was easy to fall into a perfectionist model of the church. Those who were indeed in the church were those who were, for want of a better phrase, the super Christians. These were the pious, the holy ones, who seemed to have a direct line to God. To our mortal eyes, these people were

perfect. In this idea of the church, only those who reached these giddy heights had a place. The others were, in one way or another, excluded or unworthy. On one occasion, a lady with whom we travelled to Hobart spoke of people who were on her Parish Council, **who were just not with it.** (As an aside, when you share with people like this, the with it tends to be thinking my way...)

Age is a beautiful thing because idealism gives way to reality. And it is these things of which the transfiguration informs us. For all his humanity, Jesus was God, and in the transfiguration event, he showed a little of what this meant to his disciples.

So profound was this experience that Peter writes of it in his letter that was our second reading today. We should be encouraged to see beyond the obvious and look for hidden glory. And in the church, so battered by scandal and seeming failure, to understand this hidden glory. This hidden divine spark.

Working as I do with the senior staff, I am often confronted by others who wish to tell me how the Bishop has failed them. (Sad, because I usually know more of the background). We can become so locked into the failures of others to meet our expectations that we fail to see the image of God that they reveal.

More so, the transfiguration should inform us as to our ministry. In the same way, that Jesus revealed himself to his disciples, we are called to reveal that divine nature to others. We are to be the transfigured Christ in our Neighbourhood, in our region, that those

who meet us may see beyond that which they know - to the potential underneath.

This picks up the purpose of being salt and light, the purpose of doing justice, loving mercy and humbling walking with our God. The revelation of Jesus through the transforming power of the Gospel can influence those around us.

Let us pray that as the world looks upon us - that they may see the glory of Christ in our lives.

AMEN