

Resources for Parish Worship



There is a lot going on in the Church lectionary over the next few weeks. Last Wednesday was the feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple (called Candlemas), next Tuesday is Shrove Tuesday and Lent begins on Wednesday. What we are not celebrating is the Feast of the Transfiguration, which does not arrive until early August. The wise people who put together the readings for churches, week by week, have chosen to put the story of Jesus' Transfiguration in the sequence in which it occurred during His life, at the start of the Passion story.

In the last week before the Lenten journey starts, we move to the mountain-top to revisit the Transfiguration. This is another one of those stories which we know so well, we can easily slip into 'same old, same old' thinking. But, there are some wonderful gems in the Matthew narrative, especially when linked with the other readings, that can be teased out this week. I particularly like, and have developed in these resources, the focus on God's affirmation – of Christ, of God's called ones, and of us as followers of Christ. Flowing from this, inevitably, is the call for us to be "affirmers" in the same way as God is revealed to be in this story.

The Sunday before Lent - Transfiguration - Sun 26 February, 2017

While the supernatural event witnessed by Peter, James and John was both wonderful and awe-inspiring, the event gathers real meaning from its position in the last few days before Jesus began His fateful journey to Jerusalem and the Cross. Matthew places the Transfiguration account in chapter 17, and after only four more chapters recounting Jesus' healing and teaching, the Disciples are gathered outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Jesus' status as the only human to be fully part of God is difficult for us to understand. It must have been hard for His friends to understand too. In the Transfiguration they were privileged to see Jesus in His Heavenly setting, both Himself but Transfigured, to catch a glimpse of His destiny outside their time. The presence of great prophets of the past, Moses and Elijah, shows us that in God's space, Heaven, the barriers of time do not exist. The limitations of this world and its physical laws and logic do not matter either. In Heaven there is only love and one-ness with God. This glorious revelation was granted to these three men, as they watched their friend on the mountain top. They didn't know what to make of it. Peter was reduced to babbling absurdities (as I expect we all would). But the Transfiguration, which linked Jesus to His Heavenly destination must have sustained Jesus in His last painful, humiliating hours as a man, and it must have given His loving friends hope in the darkness of their disillusion and despair. So should this glimpse of the Reality beyond ours give us hope and sustain us through the dark times.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Exodus 24 : 12-18

Our Old Testament reading is chosen for its likeness to today's Gospel. On the threshold of Lent we are reminded of the awesome holiness of God. This story of Moses tells us how on a mountain-top he had a transfiguring experience, as if taken up into the glory of God.

2 Peter : 1 : 16-21

This letter, in the name of Peter, reminds Christians of the second century that Jesus was no ordinary man, but one whom his first disciples had seen transfigured in glory, as God disclosed him to be his Son. All the prophecies

Matthew 17 : 1-9

The Lord's closest friends see him transfigured upon a mountain-top, in a disclosure of his true identity. In the presence of the figures of Moses and Elijah, a cloud of glory comes upon him and the voice of the holy one is heard.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Exodus%2024:%2012-18%0Acw%20Psalm%202%0A%2BOR%0Acw%20Psalm%2099%0A2%20Peter%201:%2016-21%0AMatthew%2017:%201-9

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O Lord,
who hast taught us that all our doings without charity
are nothing worth;
Send thy Holy Spirit,
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity,
the very bond of peace and of all virtues,
without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee;
Grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake.

Collect Two

Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
Give us grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

and/or

O God, our teacher and our judge:
Enrich our hearts with the goodness of your wisdom
and renew us from within:
that all our actions, all our thoughts and all our words
may bear the fruit of your transforming grace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

We give thanks dear Lord for your saving goodness for us and for all people.
We thank you that you are with each one of us as walk life's highway. That
whether we feel spiritually or elated or face distress and tiredness, that you

The Sunday before Lent - Transfiguration - Sun 26 February, 2017

are our constant friend and companion. Help us to trust in you at all times, through life's high's and low's that we might come at last to behold the revelation of your majesty.

We pray for — — — — — as they have been baptized. May they know the closeness of your presence throughout their lives, to uphold and sustain them in the Christian life. And we pray for all Christians as we seek to be witnesses of your saving love in a world which often has little time for hearing the words of spiritual life.

We pray for all of those who are in need.

We continue to remember those who suffer from the effects of — — — — —. We pray for aid agencies and all those engaged in bringing relief. We give thanks for the generosity of so many people who have given of time and money and especially those who are on the ground in areas of devastation helping to rebuild communities and bring food and medical aid.

We pray that the whole world would unite to help those who live in poverty. That rich nations would be mindful of the need to reach out to those less fortunate.

We also pray that wisdom would be given to world leaders as they seek to help bring an end to the centuries of conflicts which have crippled countries like Africa and left their people without, education, medicine, freedom or food.

We pray for those who are known to us and in need of prayer. We continue to pray for — — — — — and ask for your blessing to be upon the family and that Peter would know your healing touch upon his life.

We give thanks for those who have died and we light a candle as we give thanks for them and pray for their loved ones.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light which no darkness can quench, we light a candle to symbolize the light of Christ which eternally shines and brings hope and we remember — — — — —

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

The Sunday before Lent - Transfiguration - Sun 26 February, 2017

Presider or deacon

Let us offer prayers to God whose glory is a devouring fire, a light shining out of darkness.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy catholic church throughout the world, sharing the death and resurrection of Christ.

Lord, have mercy.

For N our bishop, for presbyters and deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all

the people of God.

Lord, have mercy.

For all the nations and peoples of the earth, and for justice, mercy, and peace.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who are needy, desolate, forgotten, suffering, lonely, and disconsolate.

Lord, have mercy.

For the dying and the dead, and for those who mourn.

Lord, have mercy.

That all the world may reflect the splendour of God and share in the divinity of Christ.

Lord, have mercy.

Remembering N, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

Blessed are you, God of light eternal. Hear our prayers for all peoples and let your glory shine on us this day, that our lives may proclaim your goodness and our works give you honour; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Holy God

we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Sunday before Lent - Transfiguration - Sun 26 February, 2017

May we who are partakers at his table
reflect his life in word and deed,
that all the world may know
his power to change and save.
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

Lord,
in this sacrament you have nourished us
with the spiritual food of the body and blood of your dear Son.
Not only with our lips
but with our lives may we truly confess his name,
and so enter the kingdom of heaven.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Common Worship*

Holy God, you know the disorder of our sinful lives: set straight our crooked hearts, and bend our wills to love your goodness and your glory in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Common Worship Shorter Collect*

God of life and light, your Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death on the cross. Give us grace to perceive his glory that we may be strengthened to follow him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. *Methodist Worship*

Lord God, whose glory shines upon us in the face of Jesus Christ, and whose nature is made known to us in the mystery of the cross: number us we pray, among his faithful followers for whom nothing matters but the doing of your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Methodist Worship*

Father you never forget us or turn away from us even when we fail you, You sent your Son Jesus who gave his life for us, cured those who were sick, cared for those who were poor and cried for those who were sad. He forgave

The Sunday before Lent - Transfiguration - Sun 26 February, 2017

sinner and taught us to forgive each other. For all your love we give you thanks. We open our hearts to him; we remember how he died and rose again to live now in us. Amen *Scottish liturgy*

Lord, there are times when we are so concerned about ourselves that we don't think of others. We ask for the gift of your Spirit that we may grow in awareness of others: - noticing when someone is unhappy, - sensing when there's something wrong for somebody, - seeing when someone feels cut off or isolated, - knowing when to say the right word, - expressing thanks and compliments, - being thoughtful when someone is ill, - giving words of encouragement, - helping someone to feel welcome, - realising when someone needs the opportunity to talk. May we grow in sensitivity towards others. Amen.

Lord, in times of large opportunity and fast-changing circumstances give us the big vision. May your work not be curtailed by past ways of ministry; give us clean, focused aims and the grace to leave the outcome to you. Amen.
Thomas Kingston, Superintendent, Dublin District

Almighty God, merciful Father, we are sinful by nature and have sinned against You in our thoughts, words and actions. But we are sorry for our transgressions and pray You, of Your bountiful mercy, to be gracious and merciful unto us. Forgive us for Jesus' sake, renew us by Your Spirit and lead us in the way everlasting. Amen.

MEDITATION

Beside the head of the Queen on British coins appear the letters "F.D.". They are an abbreviation in Latin for the words "Defender of the Faith." This was a title given by the Pope to King Henry VIII, (the eighth) recalling how, in his first years as king, Henry had written a book about the Sacraments, "defending" what Catholics believe. Some years later he would be executing Catholics.

Sir Thomas More 1478, became a man of great learning, a lawyer, and the father of four children. King Henry VIII valued his friendship, appointing him Lord Chancellor, the main government minister of the time. The king knew that Thomas More was above corruption; he was a person of integrity and honesty at a time when money bought what was thought of as 'justice'.

The king wanted to divorce his queen (Catherine of Aragon) and marry Anne Boleyn instead. When the Pope proclaimed that that was wrong, the English

The Sunday before Lent - Transfiguration - Sun 26 February, 2017

parliament passed an Act declaring the king to be “Supreme Head of the Church in England”, and Henry decided he could do as he wished in many things. This action also led to the destruction (“Dissolution”) of many monasteries and cathedrals in England as the king confiscated and sold their lands and possessions.

Thomas More knew that he could not agree with what the king was doing and, even though many bishops supported the actions of the king, Thomas remarked that “their consciences must speak for them; mine must speak for me.” Thomas still considered himself loyal to the king and, when he was condemned to death, he said: “I die the King’s good servant, but God’s first.”

Let us pray: God our Father, teach us to distinguish clearly between right and wrong, that we may grow in character and develop a true sense of values through following Jesus, your Son and our Brother. We pray, too, for all who are in positions of leadership in our country that they may be inspired by the values of the gospel. We pray that they may live as people of integrity and honesty, growing in a sense of duty and responsibility, always being aware of the needy, and ready to be of service to others. Amen. *This is Church*

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

New Covenant, New Commitment

‘not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished’

So when did Jesus envisage that the day of the accomplishment would take place? We know that after his death the disciples realised that the old covenant had very surely passed away and a new way had been opened up for people to come to God, apart from the Jewish Law. This was a painful process, so much so that even Peter and Paul and James fell out over it and argued about whether Gentiles could be saved apart from such things as obedience to the old Jewish food laws. You will probably remember the trouble reported in Galatians over whether a person had to be circumcised. It got so heated that the writer (Paul) in Galatians 5:12 says that he wishes his opponents would clear off and castrate themselves. Not the sort of ecclesiastical debate which we are used to hearing.

The difference of course is that these Apostles actually believed something and that is rare these days. Often we are left wondering exactly who would dare to die for anything anymore. For those early Christians life was not worth living unless Christ was worth dying for. Jesus had offered something radical and new, so new that the writer to the Hebrews recognised that ‘By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete

The Sunday before Lent - Transfiguration - Sun 26 February, 2017

and aging will soon disappear.’ Hebrews Chapter 8:12. With the death of Jesus there was nothing short of a new road opened up to God. It was not a narrow one anymore, restricted to certain people who called themselves Jews. Now it was for all people, whether they were slave or free, Jew or Gentile.

That was the good news, but of course whilst circumcision, obedience to all those funny laws in Leviticus (including of course the ten commandments) passed away, now came a whole new depth of commitment which went much further than the old covenant. Now the Christian had to give everything to God, just as Jesus freely offered his own life. No wonder so many of those first Christians ended up dead. *By Charles Royden*

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The heart of this year’s transfiguration readings is God’s affirmation – especially of Christ. In Exodus, Moses is called to meet with God on the mountain to receive God’s commands, both affirming the leadership and ministry of Moses, and foreshadowing the meeting of Jesus with God on the mountain. Psalm 2 expresses God’s affirmation of God’s son, and Psalm 99 shows how God has affirmed God’s called servants, and has spoken from the cloud, even as God did with Jesus. Peter draws attention to his experience of Christ’s transfiguration, and of God’s voice affirming Christ, and on the basis of this affirms the trustworthiness of the prophets’ message. All of these passages serve to draw our attention to God’s voice speaking from out of the cloud and affirming Christ, as well as to the affirmation of Moses and Elijah in their appearance to Christ in this event. Since God saw fit to affirm Christ in this way, it raises the question of what that means for us. In the first place, it must challenge us to reflect again on our view of Christ. It must cause us to think again about the way in which we believe God’s affirmation and act on it in our response to Christ. In the second place, God’s affirmation of Christ, becomes the basis on which we trust and adopt Christ’s way of living – as Peter suggests. This moment, placed before Christ turns toward his death, was intended to affirm again that his way of sacrifice is God’s chosen way. This was an advance assurance for the disciples, who faced deep doubt in the face of Christ’s death, but is also an affirmation for us as we face times when Christ’s way appears to be “failing” or costing us too much, or doesn’t make sense.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: Two immediate implications of this week’s theme

come to mind. The first is that God's affirmation of Christ can and must inform the work we do as Christ-followers in the world. This may mean that we need to resist the temptation towards functional atheism, in which we get so caught up in the work of justice and addressing social ills that we become little more than a social upliftment organisation. It may mean ensuring that we remain committed to Christ's sacrificial way, even though more expedient, but less ethical, possibilities are available to us. It may mean preserving our own spirituality so that the radiance of Christ shines from us, even when we're faced with conflict, persecution, struggle or misunderstanding. Whatever it may mean for us specifically, there is no question that the light of Christ's character and Christ's way of living are desperately needed in our world. The second implication – which flows from the first – is the powerful role that affirmation can play in bringing justice into the world. It is easy to criticise, easy to break down and easy to oppose. But, real life and justice are found when we seek and find common ground, even with our antagonists. This approach was what got Nelson Mandela into dialogue with F.W. De Klerk in the process which ended apartheid. This was the approach that was embraced by Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. In addition, when we take the time and energy to affirm the creativity and resilience of the poor, when we affirm the courage of peacemakers, when we affirm the servanthood of those who work with the homeless and those on the fringes of society, we strengthen the efforts of these faithful people, and support the work of justice in the world. When we affirm the efforts, the good intentions and the positive work that is done by those we disagree with, we build bridges which can lead to peace and justice. And when we affirm one another, we give ourselves the courage and strength to persevere even in the face of great hardship. The Transfiguration, then, is not just an amazing event of the past. As we follow Christ's way, we embrace God's affirmation of Christ, and as we follow God's example of affirmation, we allow the light of Christ to shine brighter in our world.

LOCAL APPLICATION: It is unfortunate that the church is often known more for what we condemn or criticise than what we affirm. It is all too easy to oppose and to say 'no' to other groups, other initiatives or other communities. But, rather than reflect Christ's glory and God's affirmation of Christ, we only leave people feeling bruised and rejected. Further, there is the tendency to adopt the same attitude as Peter – attempting to 'contain' and 'preserve' our experience of God for ourselves. But, God's affirmation of Christ calls us to listen to him, and what he instructs is for us to return to others to embrace them with Christ's sacrificial love. A significant question to ask, then, as we seek to impact our communities for Christ, is this: What can we affirm and celebrate in our community?

Of course, the work of affirmation is also something that must happen within our churches. Relationships, connectedness and community are built through celebrating one another and affirming one another. It is as we recognise the image of God within each other, and enable each other to shine, as Christ did, that we each find our place in community and in the work of God that we are called to do. Then, as we gather for worship, we can come with the expectation of encountering the transfigured Christ – indeed of experiencing a kind of transfiguration for ourselves – as the light of Christ radiates from each of us, and we are prepared to recognise and acknowledge it. Such an encounter will inevitably change us, and then, we will find ourselves moving out into the world to recognise the Christ-light everywhere, to affirm all who we meet, and to draw all people into this affirming, Christ-revealing way of living.

SERMON OUTLINE

Matt 17:1-9 he was transfigured....

a key event in the life and ministry of Jesus – difficult for modern minds to comprehend – as it was for the disciples – Peter, James & John – the inner circle eg in Gethsemane...

1. The Mountain – traditionally Mt Tabor in the heart of Jezreel Valley – but more likely Mt hermon rising to over 9000ft in the north - *a high mountain...* There something fantastic happened - *he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white* – Christ in his glorious majesty – a foretaste of his heavenly glory....

2. The Meeting – something even stranger occurred - *3 there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.*

a) Moses – the great law-giver of Sinai – leader of his people in the great escape from Egypt in the old Exodus...

b) Elijah – the great prophet – taken up into heaven in a whirlwind – forerunner of the Messiah (Malachi 4.5).

They spoke of what Jesus was to accomplish in Jerusalem – the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets – the new Exodus!

It was to him a great encouragement as he faced the future...

3. The Messiah – the authenticity of Jesus' Person is confirmed by *a voice from the cloud:- 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!'* It was a terrifying experience for the disciples - *they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear* – but were reassured by Jesus - *'Get up and do not be afraid.'* What thoughts and questions assailed their minds as they made their way back down the mountain... The memory of it was

The Sunday before Lent - Transfiguration - Sun 26 February, 2017

precious to them as affirmed by Peter - *Lord, it is good for us to be here* – words enshrined in the Church of the Transfiguration on Mt Tabor. *By Norman Porteus*

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Matthew 17 : 1-9

Gospel analysis. Good exegetical account of The Transfiguration. Three sermons on The Transfiguration on the Sermons from Seattle site.

http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/series_b_trasnfigurationGA.htm

http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/series_a_mountains_valleys_and_plains.htm

http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/series_a_vision_on_a_mountaintop.htm

http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/series_c_jcsuperman.htm

The listener is asked to reflect on a pleasant place they have visited. The scene of the Transfiguration had a similar impact on those present. However, it also is a picture of what is to come on the Christian journey.

<http://bradsmith80.blogspot.com/2008/02/be-transformed-sermon-matthew-171-9.html>

Don't Just Do Something--Sit There! Matthew 17:1-9

"Don't just stand there; do something!" A familiar and urgent command designed to spur us on out of complacency into action! Peter essentially barks out this imperative in response to witnessing the induction of Jesus into the faith heroes hall of fame by virtue of his appearance on the mountain with Moses and Elijah, not to mention his glowing transfiguration.

http://day1.org/2693-dont_just_do_somethingsit_there

God Comes to Us

The 12 disciples had journeyed far in their lives as they followed Jesus. In fact, one could say they had seen things beyond anything they had ever imagined. As Jesus taught them, they had been challenged with ideas and ideals they could not fully comprehend.

In John's Gospel, when John the baptizer had recommended to two of them to follow Jesus, they expected great things, but not near what they were

The Sunday before Lent - Transfiguration - Sun 26 February, 2017

seeing and hearing. When in the other three Gospels the fishermen are challenged to drop their nets and Levi is challenged to leave his tax table, they would have never guessed what an adventure awaited them.

http://day1.org/923-god_comes_to_us

CHILDREN

Transfiguration, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/year-eighth-sunday-in-epiphany-eighth_13.html

Camping Out (Almsgiving), Fran Woodruff, On The Chancel Steps

<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2014/02/16/almsgiving/>

Faith Formation Journeys children's sermon, Leta Behrens

<http://faithformationjourneys.blogspot.co.uk/2011/03/childrens-sermon-transfiguration-year.html>

["Sermon of the Week,"](#) / ["Mensajes para ninos,"](#) Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles.
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

I want to walk

We really want to thank you Lord.

Abba father, let me be

Father hear the prayer we offer (Gotts will machen)

Great is thy faithfulness

All my hope on God is founded

Come let us sing of a wonderful love

Rock of ages (Tune Toplady)

Judge eternal

[Christ Is Made The Sure Foundation](#)

[The Mountain](#)

[All Hail The Power Of Jesus' Name](#)

[An Image Of That Heavenly Light](#)

[Jesus On The Mountain Peak](#)

[How Great Is Our God](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Shine Jesus Shine](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Here I Am To Worship](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

The Sunday before Lent - Transfiguration - Sun 26 February, 2017

[Open The Eyes Of My Heart, Lord](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Open Our Eyes, Lord](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title