

## The Transfiguration of the Lord – Year A

### 6<sup>th</sup> August 2016

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Throughout history, God has struggled with His creation basically because we are just plain stupid. No matter how hard God tries we just don't get it. If you're sitting there thinking I'm not stupid I understand God's message I get it, what's this guy on about, I'm an intelligent human being. That's good I've got your attention. But as for being an intelligent human being well that's an oxymoron. Today's readings are a potted history of God's attempts to convey to creation, creation's destiny. In the Book of Daniel God is described as a benevolent king whose sovereignty will never be destroyed. Thus creation's destiny was the stability under a benevolent king. This is because in the time of Daniel approximately eight centuries before Christ the Assyrians had turned the kingdoms of Israel and Judah into a province of their vast empire. Soon after the Assyrian conquest, their empire fell to the Babylonians. Most of the Jews, who survived the Babylonian conquest, were deported. So life in the time of Daniel was neither stable nor benign, thus God offered His people what they craved and understood, life under a stable benevolent king. Over

the next 800 years God sent prophets to proclaim His redemptive plan and creation's ultimate destiny. You see, we are created in the image and likeness of our creator God and we were meant for much more than life under a stable benevolent king, what our God offers us His creation is the opportunity share in His creative power. God sent Jesus to us to proclaim His Kingdom on earth to proclaim a message of gentleness and peace.

For me the 6<sup>th</sup> of August is a potent symbol of God's love and our own stupidity. The 6<sup>th</sup> of August the day which the Church celebrates the Transfiguration of the Lord to me speaks of Jesus' frustration with His disciples and by implication us. Jesus has spent some time with His disciples and the crowds trying explain the Kingdom of Heaven and they missed the point. In fact the disciples would appear to more worried about who was going to sit where in the Kingdom. Jesus like some exasperated teacher takes Peter, James and John to show them their destiny. In Mathew's account Jesus was transfigured and shone like the Sun and next to Him stood Moses and Elijah. At this point what does Peter, wonderful Peter who so often encapsulates humanity's brokenness, do? Peter says let's build three

tents one for You, Moses and Elijah. For Peter beautifully encapsulates our collective ego. Peter confronted with this indescribable vision wants to add his own bit to improve on things. But God has other ideas and speaks. When confronted with the awesome spectacle of God the three disciples fall on their faces in terror. The thing that really blows me away is that the Gospels call us to be Christlike, we are called to be transfigured and shine like the Sun. We are called to stand before the majesty of God and be greeted as His daughters and sons in whom he is well pleased. We are made in the image and likeness of God.

The 6th of August also marks the anniversary of the dropping of a nuclear weapon on Hiroshima resulting directly in the death of some 200,000 people. To paraphrase the closing prayer from the Benedictine Breviary for the Feast: God the creator of the universe, the God of life, in a blaze of light on Mount Tabor revealed a transfigured Christ, revealing Christ as His Beloved Son and promising us a share in that transfigured glory. But on August 6th 1945 we children of that promise chose to use a nuclear weapon which derived its power from the very fabric of God's creation. A weapon that in a blinding, noiseless flash,

annihilated life, disfiguring the face of Christ and His Gospel call to gentleness and peace. We now live in an age where the nations of the world hold stockpiles of nuclear weapons many thousands of times more powerful than the weapon used on that day. Humanity in fact has enough weaponry to destroy the very planet we live on and life itself.

Yet humanity is capable of using that same power that could destroy life itself or to cure people of the scourge of cancer and to explore the marvels of God's creation. Last week I attended a lecture given by the designers of the NASA space probe "New Horizons". Launched in 2006; New Horizons swung past Jupiter in 2007, and conducted a six-month-long reconnaissance flyby study of Pluto and its moons in 2015, it is now exploring the outer reaches of our Solar system. For me the irony of this space probe is that it is powered by a plutonium nuclear reactor, the same element used to make nuclear weapons. God has given us His creation free will so we can either use it to benefit His creation or destroy it. Just as an aside the most powerful computers in the world are not use for medical or climate research but to develop and maintain nuclear

stockpiles that is why nations no longer need to conduct nuclear tests.

The feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord is a stark call, away from the abyss, away from the blinding flash of our own stupidity, to the blaze of light of Mount Tabor, to our destiny revealed in the glory of Christ. We are called to lives that are beacons of the Gospels. Beacons that pierce the clouds enshrouding earth, so that even in the darkness of these times humanity may believe Christ's day will dawn. The question we need to ask ourselves is: Will we be greeted by our God as His beloved daughters and sons in whom he is well pleased or rejected as agents of misery and death?