

**“Revealed in Light”**

(Mark 9.2-9)

Grant Bullen

**Epiphany – God Revealed in Light**

God desires relationship with us.

And so, although always a mystery our minds cannot contain, GOD reveals Himself/Herself to us.

It happens, regularly and repetitively... the veil of our ordinary perception – often drab and fearful – is torn in two, and the true beauty of GOD, of life, of our humanity, is seen.

Epiphany is the season where we explore the glory of GOD, the true beauty of reality, revealed to us in Light.

**Epiphanies**

Today we end the Epiphany season, telling the story of the Transfiguration.

Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to a secluded mountain... to pray. And there the disciples witness their master transfigured in brilliant shining light.

They see his full beauty as the Christ... the Human One... revealed in dazzling light.

This mountain-epiphany is a special experience, particular to its place in time, Scripture, and tradition.

But this story also reminds us of the experiences of divine revelation that come to us, repetitively and regularly, throughout our lives.

Cartoonist, Michael Leunig describes such an experience...

*“Many years ago, I camped in the dry Finke River bed in the Simpson Desert... In the dead of night, I suddenly awoke... as if aroused by some gentle whisper from another world, and was astonished to find above me a heaven full of stars as I had never seen them before. It was as if I had stumbled upon a great and spectacular ceremony in the cosmos: a celestial event hitherto unrevealed to humanity... Then from the horizon, with perfect timing, a gigantic meteor appeared and passed slowly and majestically across the heavens, painting a brilliant trail of fire upon the vast silence of the night ... The next morning I woke in a blissful state of clarity and perfect peace.”*

(The Age, December 30, 2006)

(Beautiful!)

Or... here's Thomas Merton, 20<sup>th</sup> century monk and mystic, describing an epiphany in his life...

*"In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut,  
in the centre of the shopping district,  
I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realisation that I loved all those people,  
that they were mine and I theirs,  
that we could not be alien to one another  
even though we were total strangers.  
It was like waking from a dream of separateness....  
Of spurious self isolation in a special world,  
the world of renunciation and supposed holiness.  
The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream..."*

March 19, 1958 (Journal)

These are epiphany experiences – special and yet also common to all of us.

As in turning the corner and being overwhelmed by a stunning sunset... or that moment at your birthday dinner when time stops, and you know you are swimming in a sea of love... or in the wonder of seeing a newborn baby... or finding yourself silently crying in the middle of a movie because it's all just so beautiful...

These are the transfigurations that come repetitively and regularly to every one of us. The veil of our ordinary perception – often drab and fearful – is torn in two, and the true beauty of GOD, of life, of our humanity, is seen.

Gerald Manley Hopkins spoke it in verse...

*"The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil..."*

God's Grandeur

We not only see the world transfigured, but as witnesses of 'bursting-through-light', we too are transfigured... changed... altered.

The disciples come back from the mountain changed men – they'll never see Jesus the same again.

Leunig says... *"I woke in a blissful state of clarity and perfect peace..."*

Thomas Merton was freed from his former priggish superiority as a monk, and gave the rest of his life in love for all people, who he now knew were intimately his sisters and brothers.

If we pay attention to these epiphanies we are given, if we stand before them in ordinary awe and wonder... we can never see things quite the same way again.

### **Our Response**

But herein lies the problem...

Too often we don't...

Look again at the disciples in today's Transfiguration story... (and here I am including some extra details given to us in *Luke's* account).

First up, the three of them struggle with sleep – in fact they're lucky not to have slept through the whole thing. They almost miss it!

Then, instead of simply revelling in the privilege being given them... instead of just sitting there in awe and wonder, soaking it all up... what does Peter do? He talks... breaks the magic of the moment by blabbing-on with inane rubbish... about building shelters for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. He talks, and the vision disappears. He can't bear the silence, the awe and wonder... so he talks...

And notice, on their way down the mountain, Jesus has to tell them not to tell anyone. Why? Because the disciples are bursting to put it on Facebook, Instagram or whatever... You know, *"Here's a selfie of me up the mountain, and if you look really carefully, you might just make out the shape of 3 shimmering figures in the back there? Oh yeah, it was really amazing! Of course Jesus chose me especially for the experience!"* Jesus has to tell them, *"This experience is for you! It's you who needs to be changed. Hold it precious to yourself!"*

Well, that's us... way too much of the time.

We sleep-walk through much of life, not paying attention to the revelation that GOD is showering us with.

And when we do stumble across an epiphany, we move on way too quickly... (*"I have to be somewhere else."*)

Notice what we do in prayer and worship – if it gets too quiet, too intense, if Presence becomes too challenging... we move on, very quickly, to the next thing. We fill the space with words or activity.

And once we've moved on, we forget the experience ever happened.

BUT... if we pay attention to these epiphanies we are given, if we stand before them in ordinary awe and wonder... we will never see things quite the same again.

We too are transfigured.

### ***The Bridge to Lent***

Epiphany is the season of exploring the true reality – of GOD, of life, of ourselves – through the experience of LIGHT.

In this story of the Transfiguration, the season ends with a bang! It's beautiful!

But... there's also something else happening here... and it's important.

The Transfiguration is also getting us ready for what is to come... it is the bridge... or the door-hinge... to the season of Lent (beginning on Wednesday).

In the gospels, the Transfiguration event follows Jesus' first prediction of his death, and in the action from here on in, Jesus turns his face to Jerusalem and the cross.

And that is where we as a Church are heading next... that is our Lenten journey and focus.

Today we went with Peter, James, and John to a secluded place to pray with Jesus... and there the glory, the beauty of GOD was revealed in shining light.

In 6 weeks' time, Holy Week, we'll go with Peter, James and John to a secluded place on the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, to pray with Jesus... and *there* the glory of GOD, the true nature and beauty of God, will be revealed... in the suffering and death of Jesus, the Christ.

They are twin-stories, book-ending the season of Lent... but whereas today the doorway to knowing God and true reality is LIGHT, in Gethsemane we will be exploring a more difficult truth – God's glory revealed in what we perceive as DARKNESS.

In 5 weeks' time I'll be preaching again and the text is from *John*... Jesus says,

*“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”* (12.23)

And the glory he is speaking of... is his crucifixion.