

Blessed be God who animates our lives and offers us transfigurations beyond words...

When I realized it was the Sunday of the Transfiguration, I thought I would preach on my recent experience on the Mount of Transfiguration when I was transported to another realm as I gazed outside through a glass frontal beyond the altar at a grove of olive trees through which the sun was beginning to shine, sparkling, occasional blinding glare, then more rain, more dreariness. I imagined a flash of holiness. I imagined a white drenching light as the disciples witnessed a mysterious energy which transfigured Jesus, caused his appearance to actually change. But I could not imagine the right words to describe this radiance, this glory.

I thought of Peter and I understood the tendency to box bottle contain holiness but know better...know the reprimand.

I imagined that I would speak about our human tendency to contain such experiences of glory as Peter had. To build around it as though it could be contained...as though we even know what **It** is! To protect from loss or grief.

But I couldn't imagine how this could be done and still retain the wonder, the immeasurability.

How do you describe glory? How do you put words to wonder?

I remembered Rabbi and mystic Abraham Joshua Heschel who said" To become aware of the ineffable (the mysterious unexplainable) is to part company with words...The tangent to the curve of human experience lies beyond language"

It seems to me that words diminish somehow the infinitude. just like tents or booths they wall off eternity.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Transfiguration happened.

There is no doubt in my mind that it happened when it did to encourage and inspire the disciples for what we now know would be an agonizing journey to the cross.

There is no doubt in my mind that we, poised on the edge of entering that wilderness, are also meant to be inspired and encouraged to journey on, to come down off the mountaintop...to enter the wilderness of Lent

The Word made flesh and who has come among us has been transfigured into the unbearable lightness of being! On the mount of transfiguration with Moses and Elijah, two prophets who have known transfiguration themselves, on that holy mountain the Word made flesh was Radianced, illuminated! That we might keep going, that our hearts might burn, that we might know a foretaste of Resurrection, that we might be awed by the power of God

What we have known is wonder! What we have witnessed is the ineffable, a glimpse into another realm, a glimpse into heaven.

And so that was 380 words approximately which do not come even close to describing or capturing the Transfiguration of our Lord. They only point to significance...

Perhaps words just don't do it although I can think of some poetry which assists: "or did we see that day the unseeable one glory of the everlasting world, perpetually at work though never seen." Edwin Muir

Perhaps words don't do it and we can paint the brilliant light or photograph it: Rembrandt did and there is a wonderful story of a woman who carries a selfie of her son taken too close in a dark room so the flash dominates the frame yet she knows he is in the light!

For me music comes closest to the completeness of this moment. Music in itself a transfiguration: an invisible melody transferred from strings or breath? the violin is not the change, the note is. The singer is not the transfiguration the invisible voice is...Jesus's body is not the holiness, his complete love and divinity are.

In the end only a silence charged with the grandeur of the glory of God can duplicate or transfer the experience on the holy mountain.

Bach comes as close as I can imagine to transfiguring space. Converting ordinary to extraordinary, mundane to mystical. His cantatas were written as liturgy itself, worship in musical form. They were intended to honor God and to transform sacred space. he signed his sacred works SDG sola dei gloria

So today our musical meditation comes a little earlier as we meditate and ponder the Transfiguration and listen to Bach's cantata BWV140 Wachet Auf: It is not only transformative transporting heavenly music; it also carries us in its message to stay awake to move into Lent with renewed attention and intention.

-----Meditation-----

May the word made flesh which dwells among us be radianced that you might know the glory of the Living God. May we come to know that beauty transfigures. May we be aware of the perpetual sacred energy which transforms our lives. AMEN

TRANSFIGURATION by Malcolm Guite  
For that one moment, 'in and out of time',  
On that one mountain where all moments meet,  
The daily veil that covers the sublime  
In darkling glass fell dazzled at his feet.  
There were no angels full of eyes and wings  
Just living glory full of truth and grace.  
The Love that dances at the heart of things

Shone out upon us from a human face  
And to that light the light in us leaped up,  
We felt it quicken somewhere deep within,  
A sudden blaze of long-extinguished hope  
Trembled and tingled through the tender skin.  
Nor can this blackened sky, this darkened scar  
Eclipse that glimpse of how things really are.