

TRINITY NEWS

Pentecost IX Transfiguring Moments Surpassing Anxiety and Uncertainty

This week the universal church remembered the Mount of Transfiguration recalled in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. It did not change Jesus, though “transfiguration” in the text means “transformation of outer form” in a new visual version of person. The glory within Jesus Anointed (Christ) suddenly appeared outside and around his person. This glory-visualisation did not last. It reappeared in some sense after the resurrection.

There is a beautiful church on the top of Mount Tabor in Galilee that marks the place and the moment in historical retrospect if not in factual location. The lights around the church shine on top of the mountain at night; and around the great girth of the mountain dimly twinkling lights of the villages mark its connection with the valley below. August 6 is the date in the liturgical calendar for the Transfiguration. It is also the date of the dropping of an atom bomb on Hiroshima, when the “light of a 1000 suns” slammed into that city and seared it. Beloved Hiroko Thomson survived that day as a child. Someone who survives a fire storm of any kind always walks a little apart from what the rest of the world calls reality. They have another perspective on ‘reality’. It takes great courage to refuse the magnetic pull of other people’s versions of reality. Out of devastation comes the courage to be peaceful and at home with oneself despite a moment facing entire annihilation of person and family and familiar surroundings. Hiroko comes closer than most to being “utterly real” in the passing parade of personas that have crowded my personal configurations.

Isaiah 6:1-6 recalls the prophet’s vision of the glory of God swirling around in the Temple. John 12:39-41 claims that we have seen this same glory in Jesus Anointed. “Isaiah ...saw his glory and spoke about him.”

Archbishop Michael Ramsey was an outstanding Archbishop of Canterbury in the twentieth century. He described in his book on the Transfiguration what the Rabbis called YEKARA. That is, the glory of God shown in human conduct, exemplified for Michael Ramsey in Jesus the Anointed (Christ). It conveys a sense of an indefinable ‘presence’, and the ‘transfer’ of the presence of the holiness of Jesus was clear in Michael Ramsey.

That Presence emerges in the story of Jesus and Peter walking on water found in Matthew 14:22-33. The disciples are in a boat battered by the waves made choppy by a strong wind. Then Jesus comes walking to them on the lake in early dawn and they think that they have seen a ghost. They cower in fear, but Jesus tells them not to be afraid: "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid". Peter tests the identity of Jesus by asking him to command him to walk to him. The command to "come" rang out over the water. Peter valiantly got out of the boat and started walking on the water until the wind became more noticeable and then he was afraid and began to sink. He asked Jesus to save him and Jesus immediately reached out to his hand to steady him. Then Jesus tests Peter: "you of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat the wind ceased and those on the boat bowed down and said, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Jesus walking on water of itself may not have persuaded the disciples to declare him to be the "Son of God". Peter was held by Jesus in the water which is a miracle in itself, but perhaps he was not persuaded by that saving action. It was more likely a combination of the total context of the happening on that occasion.

I KNOW that Jesus is Divine as well as being extraordinarily human. The Divinity of Jesus can no more be proved or disproved than the existence of God. This we gather best from the process of our lives and from the context of the lasting traces of Jesus' identity that are apparent to the gaze of faith in the narratives of the Gospels. Carl Gustav Jung was asked in one of his last interviews whether he believed in God. He is said to have replied, "I don't believe, I know." As a mystic I know that Jesus is Divine because like Paul I've been caught up into things that have revealed that to me. I say the section in the creeds about Jesus without hesitation, though I know that the words are ultimately inadequate to express what can be known with huge certainty, though never proved. God cannot be proved, God can only be known and loved and trusted and borne in our hearts forever in our pilgrimage. We spend our lives searching the Scriptures and trying to say it in beautiful and telling words, but in the end we can only kneel and pray and gaze and gaze...

With kindness and care,
Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Wednesday.

- *Bible study, 10:00am*
- *Group discussion, 7:30pm Parish Hall.*

Thursday.

- *Midweek Eucharist, 10:00am, Chapel.*

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7; Psalm 67; Romans 11:13-15,29-32; Matthew 15:21-28