



# ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

*"Our mission is to bring the good news of Jesus Christ's love to our entire community through traditional Anglo-Catholic worship, fellowship, outreach, and Christian formation."*

**Our Vision:** *"We strive to be a haven of healing, reconciliation, joy and peace in service to our wider community and beyond, so that our example in prayer and practice may reflect Christ's love for us all."*

**THIS SUNDAY — February 18, 2024**

**"Lent as Transfigured Disciples" By [Mother Miriam, CSM](#)**



As we journey through a second Lent under the COVID-19 pandemic, the synoptic Gospels' story of Jesus' Transfiguration provide a fruitful opportunity for growth as disciples of the living Word and Lord. In the Transfiguration Jesus momentarily shows his true figure. His recognizable human appearance is his emptying of himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:5-9). The Transfiguration fills in the implications of Peter's Confession "You are the Christ." He is *not* a new Elijah, nor a new Moses radiant with a borrowed glory. He is the manifestation of the living God himself. But even that statement is too simplistic.

[Michael Ramsey](#) gets the balance right between God and man: "The vision of Christ is the transfiguration of man." If we are not always, continually, exquisitely sensitive to the other person, that statement looks like this: 'My vision of Christ is *my* ultimate transfiguration.' And in so doing, we lose the grace of seeing that the Transfiguration of Christ is just that, the transfiguration of Jesus; and mine *only* as I become enfolded and incorporated into Christ. In thinking about the "in-Christness" of the Transfiguration, I cannot help but be reminded of Paul's frequent encouragement of those whom he made disciples: "We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). "In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything

except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles” (Rom. 15:17-18).

I am indebted to Reginald Somerset Ward, a great spiritual director in England during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, who reflected deeply on this mystery of the Transfiguration and saw two successive phases in the disciples’ growth in knowledge and faith in our Lord. First, there was the gift of knowing who Christ really is, Emmanuel, “God-with-us,” and then came the second gift of the deepening of human faith and knowledge as experience of being with God. The revelation of Christ is by far the more concrete. The experience of God is much more abstract and formless, but very relevant to us as well as Peter, James, and John.

### Advertisement

Have you ever used a magnifying glass to burn a hole in a piece of paper or start a fire on a bright, sunny day? Think about the process. The glass focuses a narrow light beam, a form of energy, which by its greatness defies human inspection and is unapproachable by human eyes. If you look directly at the sun, you will be blinded. But the brilliant spot beneath the magnifying glass is, in truth, the actual light of the sun, gathered together and possessing the properties of the sun, and yet so limited that both it and its effects can be observed by human beings without harm, or at least can be controlled so that you don’t get burned! The magnifying glass stands for the Incarnation; the spot of light, God-made-man, Jesus Christ; and the sun, the majesty of the Godhead. Here we have the beginning of an orthodox Christian understanding of the Incarnation.

Through this illustration we can see that it was possible for human beings to observe the actual nature, power, and goodness of God in the person of Jesus Christ, and yet in such a limited form that they could bear it. From continued exposure to this point of Light, the experience and magnetic love of God develops into a fuller revelation of the divine nature of Jesus Christ. As the moving of a cloud away from the path between us and the sun may change what was a vague light under a magnifying glass into a radiance too brilliant to be gazed upon, so at the moment of the Transfiguration the Godhead of the Son shone forth.

We can thank St. Luke for telling us how this happened: “*As he was praying*, the fashion of his countenance was altered.” So it was that in prayer the union with God burst through Jesus’ body in such intensity as to become perceptible even through his garments. I wonder if Jesus had not voluntarily relinquished the change which was being wrought in him, the moment of Transfiguration might have become the moment of his Ascension. But isn’t that what Satan was tempting him to do in the third temptation in the wilderness? (Matt. 4:8-11) You might ponder the parallels

between this fact of the Transfiguration — Jesus in prayer, the majestic mountain view, and the mystery of his mission on earth — and the Holy Spirit's driving him into the wilderness for 40 days of preparation. The temptation was the same; the resistance was also the same. What made that possible?

Ward suggests that we are seeing God's grace here, defined as the power of absolute love between the Father and the Son. Jesus was so in love with his Father that he wanted to be sure every step of the way that he was doing what the Father wanted him to do. The Ascension was meant for later. This model of love should be our everyday model of discipleship.

With the disciples of Jesus, we follow Jesus up the mountain and imitate him in prayer. It is in prayer that our fingers are nerved to hold the handle of that magnifying glass that we may see the glory of God in Christ. We have this season of Lent to seek in prayer what our Lord would reveal to us: the glory of God in himself, as far as his love sees best for us. We must not decide beforehand that it can only be real if it comes in a certain way. Our Lord knows best the thread which leads into the intricate labyrinth of our mind. It may be he will reveal the nature of God by some sudden sense of reality or the slow process of thought; it may be that as we think on him the feeling of the love of God will filter through our thoughts; it may be that many a day may pass before it bears its fruit. However, it is our task to humbly seek, with the certainty and unfaltering trust, that our search will end in finding the revelation and experience of God.

Before I conclude I want to draw your attention to the place of suffering in the experience of God. How natural it is to want to avoid it. I can imagine that the three disciples were united in their bliss in seeing their Master absolutely glow and talking with such revered figures as Moses and Elijah, both of whom did not die as normal humans. Moses was said to die on Mt. Nebo to be buried by God himself (Deut. 34:1-6). Elijah, of course, ascended in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11). The disciples must have felt that they were amid some wonderful adventure in which glory passing into glory knows no end. Yet as they lay there, wakened to a sudden consciousness of mighty presences not of this world, they heard what was to their minds not further glory, but suffering and defeat.

For them and for us, it was a necessary lesson that this apparent failure to pass from glory unto glory was nevertheless the way of God; and that this new element which seemed to them loss and disgrace was, in reality, an element of gain and victory. Luke 9:31 speaks of Jesus's *exodos*, recalling the Israelites' exodus from Egypt at the Red Sea as fulfilling of God's promise on one very scary ancient night.

Here is the important point of this verse. In these few words, his exodus was spoken of as an achievement which Jesus was about to carry out, rather than a fate which he could not escape. Can you see how, in the midst of this wonderful revelation of the nature of God through Christ, a revelation was sent to the disciples concerning their own spiritual lives? Here in Christ's Transfiguration, the disciples received the revelation which turned that defeat into a victory. It was perhaps the only thing which could have roused them from their depression and returned them to their ministry. Christ had revealed to them the nature of God, and now he revealed to them the experience of Emmanuel, "God with us," whereby suffering and Passion became life and victory. They, who had thought like children that suffering could have no place in the glory of God, found that suffering was an element which, transfigured, led to the very center of that glory.

The question which is put to us by the Transfiguration is not: "Can there be any suffering in the revelation of God?" but rather: "Can there be any revelation of God without suffering?" We, looking at our own suffering on this earth, see only its ugliness, its hindrance, its loss; but plunged in the glory of the revelation of God *in Christ*, that suffering becomes itself a source of light, of glory, and of hope; and entering into the revelation of God in suffering, *with Christ by our side*, emerges from there as triumph.

If you are to have any experience of God, you must gather up the sufferings of your life, however small, and bring them to be transfigured in the revelation of Christ. See them no longer as weights hung upon you, as things to grumble at, as things to get sympathy for; but instead as molds which are shaping you, forces which are lifting you up to God, and vehicles for your praise of his glory. Placed in the light of the Transfiguration every suffering of your life becomes part of an "exodus" — that exodus you long for, whereby you leave the land of self and pass into the kingdom of God. You find the road hard for your feet: yet if there were no stones upon it, long ago would it have been overgrown, and you could never have found your way through. Sufferings are a help, sufferings are offerings, sufferings are growing-pains; and, if you are to experience God, you cannot be too thankful that you are allowed to have such, and your only anxiety will be whether you are using them to the full as a preparation for the experience of God.

Put into words, it seems so little, and yet it is one of the hardest tasks in life because it means the changing of our viewpoint. If you stand looking at the boughs of a tree admiring the intricate patterns and strange devices made by its branches, you have only to step one pace to right or left and those patterns and devices have changed their shape and their appearance. It is the same with the sufferings of life. Such a

little change in our viewpoint makes such a great change in the way they appear to us.

It is one thing to see this, but another to do it. In practice it means that you must change your thoughts about what you find hardest in your life. Instead of thinking of it as a nuisance or a hardship, think of it as an opportunity, as something to be offered to Christ. Instead of talking about it to others, talk about it to our Lord. Instead of feeling that it throws you back on yourself, feel that it unites you to God. Instead of seeing it as an excuse for depression, see it as the promise and hope of taking up your cross and following Christ.

*Mother Miriam, CSM, is the ninth Mother Superior of the Eastern Province of the Community of Saint Mary.*

Readings for the First Sunday in Lent: Genesis 9:8-17 1 Peter: 3:18-22  
Psalm: 25:3-9 Mark 1:9-13

## CALENDAR

Note: We worship in our historic church. The service will also be on Zoom. The service time is 10am. Tuesday Noon Mass and Friday during Lent Great Litany, Via Crucis held in All Saints' Church

**SUNDAY February 18 The First Sunday in Lent**

**10:00am Mass in All Saints' Church**

Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at [www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)

Recording of Mass available at [www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)

**Christian Formation and First Communion Instruction for Children**

Ages 5-12 in the Parish Hall from 10:00am-10:45am

**Adult Christian Formation** Meets next on Sunday, February 25 at noon in the Rector's Office and the Library

**TUESDAY Noon Mass in St. Mary Chapel**

**THURSDAY Spanish Class on Thursdays, from 1pm-3pm in the Library.**

FRIDAY 11:30am Great Litany  
12:00pm Via Crucis  
12:40pm Way of Love Lenten Study Group (Rector's Office)

SUNDAY **February 25, 2024 The Second Sunday in Lent**  
**10:00am Mass in All Saints' Church**  
Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at [www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)  
Recording of Mass available at [www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)  
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#### **OUR CORE VALUES:**

- Welcoming strangers like old friends
- Embracing the Anglo-Catholic tradition
- Being dependable members of a caring community
- Respecting each other's differences
- Being faithful stewards of God's gift
- Remembering that God loves everyone unconditionally