

# The Transfiguration of the Lord

Feast Day- 6<sup>th</sup> of August



- On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August, the Catholic Church celebrates the Transfiguration of the Lord.
- Transfiguration means transformed.
- This feast calls to our attention the importance of this event in Jesus' life. It is reported in each of the Synoptic Gospels (Mk 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36; Matthew 17:1-8).
- In this event can be seen an anticipation of Jesus' Resurrection, a foreshadowing of Christ's glory in heaven, and the promise of our own resurrection. We see God's affirmation of Jesus and an affirmation of the Catholic faith that Jesus was glorified by God.
- [The Transfiguration of Jesus: Summary and Meaning](#)

## **Teacher Background**

by Greg Sunter, sourced from Liturgy Help

## **Gospel Reflection (Mark 9:2-10)**

Jesus takes his most trusted disciples up a high mountain to allow them to share in what he knows is about to occur. It is a very clear teaching moment in which Jesus hopes the disciples are going to finally grasp the truth about him. As the disciples stand by, Jesus is transformed before them – suddenly bathed in light and his clothes become dazzlingly white. The disciples also see Moses and Elijah standing and talking with Jesus. Moses was the great Law-giver of Jewish tradition and Elijah the great prophet. Together, they represent the Law

and the Prophets – the combined wisdom that make up the tradition of Jewish teaching and Jewish scripture. It is the Law and the Prophets that Jesus' life and ministry brings to fulfilment. It is fitting that Moses and Elijah appear beside Jesus as the three figures combined represent fullness of Jewish tradition – the Law of Moses; the challenge and promise of the Prophets; and the compassion of Jesus that completes the other two.

Sadly, the disciples don't really get the point of what they see before them. Peter, caught up in the moment, wants to build tents on the spot to mark the moment and to continue to dwell in the moment. Jesus, however, leads them back down the mountain – back into the valley; back into the reality of life; back into the tragedy that he knows lies before them. No matter how powerful a religious experience may be, Jesus shows us that we always have to return to real life. It is not possible to remain on the 'mountaintop' as Peter would have liked to do; we have to take the experience back into the everyday of our lives.

### **Historical Context – Moses and Elijah**

Both Moses and Elijah had powerful encounters with God on the top of a mountain – it is appropriate that it is they who appear beside Jesus in the transfiguration account. Moses travelled up Mt Sinai to receive the Law from God in the form of the Ten Commandments. When Elijah was fleeing for his life from Queen Jezebel, he fled to Mt Horeb. The word of the Lord came to Elijah and told him to stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord was about to pass by. Elijah experienced the Lord in the whisper of a gentle breeze.

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Greg Sunter has worked in Catholic Education (Brisbane) for many years, most recently as a member of the Religious Education team and Mission and Formation team. He has extensive experience of praying with young people and forming others to lead prayer with young people. He is the author of books on adolescent faith, is a regular speaker at youth and evangelisation conferences, and is a retreat and reflection facilitator and presenter. His areas of interest include religious education, theology, scripture, spirituality, Catholic ethos, prayer, and ministry with young people.



## **Monologue of the Transfiguration**

by Richard Leonard, sourced from Liturgy Help

### **The Transfiguration Monologue**

I remember it well – the day, that is. We had spent it walking toward Jerusalem and talking with the people who were following us. The crowds had dropped off; of late Jesus had been saying some pretty hard things about what it means to follow him.

Most of the crowds were there to see miracles and wanted nothing to do with this new stuff. Even we, his closest friends, had problems with what he was saying.

I couldn't understand why he was heading toward Jerusalem. Everyone knew that the Chief Priest, the Scribe and the Pharisees had it in for him.

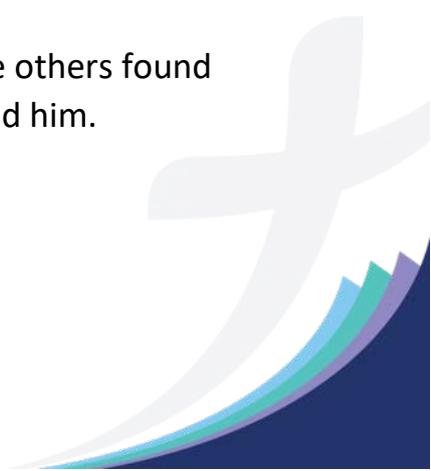
But he simply ignored our protest, turned his face toward Jerusalem and kept on walking. We were all a bit scared. But what could we do? He wouldn't even listen to Peter!

Normally as we settled down for the night, Jesus would go off alone and pray. But this night he invited three of us to go with him. Everyone was a bit puzzled by this, but, without a word of explanation, he simply led us off toward a small hill.

The night was still and not a sound could be heard, except for the crunch of gravel under our feet. I remember thinking it was like the whole world was holding its breath in anticipation of some great event. It was dark by now, but Jesus led us confidently up the slight slope toward the summit.

My confusion increased with every step. I was angry with him. The idiot. Why was he throwing his life away by going to Jerusalem? It made no sense.

Once we reached the top of the hill, Jesus sat down wearily. The others found a place on a warm rock nearby. I simply stood there and watched him.



Here was a man who could unite the people. A man who taught with authority. A man who could change the world. But all he was doing was walking calmly toward death and humiliation. Did he not have eyes to see?

As I stood there a full moon rose over the horizon. I watched it as it rose still higher into the sky and looking back toward Jesus I saw for the first time the bone-deep weariness that showed on his face.

Nothing moved. No-one said a word. I held my breath. I wanted to help him; I wanted to take his pain away.

But as he sat there, eyes close and hands clasped tight, I began to see something more.

It's hard to describe.

But what I saw was a man who was so full of love and compassion that it hurt. A man who felt the pain of others more acutely than his own.

I saw a man who loved his Father beyond all things and who felt so loved and cherished that death itself had no power over him.

Indeed, this was a man who deserved to stand beside Moses and Elijah.

This man who silently cried, seated in the dust, on top of a mere bump in Judea, was translucent with the divine love that he offered to all.

My mind was awash with pride, and grief and pain, and hope for the future.

I don't know how long I stood there, watching him silently pray. But suddenly he stood and without a word we started down the hill. We didn't speak, but I knew the others had sensed something as well. I, and I believe the other two, saw Jesus in new way.

When we reached the bottom, the others wanted to know what had happened on the hilltop, but none of us felt right saying anything. So, we shrugged them off.



And as the following weeks came to pass, I held this secret in my heart. It was only when it was all over, you know, in Jerusalem, that I began to understand what had happened on that night.

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Richard Leonard SJ is the Director of the Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting, is a member of the Australian Catholic Media Council and a film critic for all the major Australian Catholic newspapers. He completed a PhD in cinema studies at the University of Melbourne. He lectures in cinema and theology at the Jesuit College of Spirituality and has been a visiting lecturer in Australian cinema at the University of Melbourne, a visiting scholar within the School of Theatre, Film and Television at UCLA and is visiting professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Catholic University, has lectured widely and is the author of numerous books.

