

'CHANGED BY GOD'S TRANSFIGURING LOVE'  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Lent – HOMILY 25 FEBRUARY 2018

In today's Gospel passage Mark 9:2-10,  
Jesus is travelling on the **WAY** to Jerusalem to the **CROSS**.

### TRANSFIGURATION

We know the transfiguration of Jesus is powerful.

### MOSES & ELIJAH REPRESENT THE LAW & THE PROPHETS

The much-revered Old Testament figures of Moses and Elijah  
appear and talk with Jesus.

Moses represents the **LAW**, and Elijah the **PROPHETS**.

Their very presence points to Jesus who **FULFILS THE LAW AND PROPHETS**.

Just imagine two of the people you most revere in the whole history of the world,  
and they appear before you and comfortably speak with you,  
in the presence of your friends.

And that your friends so revere them as well.

It could be famous musicians or scientists or political leaders  
or inventors or artists or reformers etc.

Children can have different criteria.

Some when asked, say that they would have a Grandparent who had died.

Their criteria based on **LOVE**, and how much they miss their Grandparent.

And for some, their parent, who had died.

And the three people, alive, whom you choose to accompany you.

Jesus chose Peter, James and John.

### WHO WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO SHARE IN SUCH A SACRED MOMENT? IN WHAT WAY DO YOUR FRIENDS NOW UNDERSTAND THE MISSION AND THE PURPOSE THAT YOU HAVE IN LIFE?

And note the timing. It is on the journey to your life's fulfilment.

So many thoughts and feelings must be moving within Peter and James and John.

In fact, it is such a big event that it is beyond their understanding.

The Gospel tells us that the three were terrified,

and Peter, actually speaks, while not knowing what to say.

The event is so powerful, so beyond their current understanding,  
that they will continue to discuss it among themselves.

Let us listen to the first passage of the Gospel passage slowly,  
allowing us to feel the wonder, the sacredness,  
and the experience of being overwhelmed.

*"Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John,*

*and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves.  
And he was transfigured before them,  
and his clothes became dazzling white,  
such as no one on earth could bleach them.  
And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses,  
who were talking with Jesus.  
Then Peter said to Jesus,  
‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,  
one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’  
He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.”*

#### LENT IS SUCH A TIME TO GROW IN REFLECTION

We can be arrogant when we think that we fully understand all that God does in our lives.

Like Peter we can even talk about it, not knowing what to say.

**Like today’s Gospel, we need time to grow in our understanding of the very depth of God’s love and passion for us.**

**Lent is such a time to grow in reflection.**

Let us continue with the Gospel passage,  
as it becomes even more wondrous.

*“Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice,  
**‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’**  
Suddenly when they looked around,  
they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.  
As they were coming down the mountain,  
he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen,  
until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.  
So they kept the matter to themselves,  
questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.”*

#### CONTEXT

There are those sacred and key moments in our lives when God reveals to each of us, our purpose in life, and deepens our relationship to God.

Mark highlights for Jesus:

In Mark 1:11 was the Baptism of Jesus when God said

*“And a voice came from heaven,  
**‘You are my Son, the Beloved: and with you I am well pleased.’”***

In today’s Gospel is Mark 9:7 within the Transfiguration of Jesus

*“Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice,  
**‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’”***

And several chapters later in Mark 15:39 is the death of Jesus, when someone else understands about Jesus.

*“Now when the centurion, who was facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’”*

## THE DIFFERENCE OF A TRANSFIGURATION MOMENT

### WHAT DIFFERENCE CAN A TRANSFIGURATION MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE MAKE TO YOU? HOW WOULD IT CHANGE YOU?

Not as deep as Jesus experienced, but a moment still deep for you and me.

- A moment of grace, of depth, of insight into God’s love for you.
- A moment of being loved so, so deeply by God.
- A moment when you know with all your heart that you are **beloved**.
- A changing moment in your life’s journey.

## THE CHALLENGING EXAMPLE OF ARCHBISHOP BASHAR WARDA

Let us take a very, very challenging moment in life.

Imagine your life has been threatened several times.

Your family, your friends have lost their possessions, their lifestyles.

The trauma appears overwhelming.

**WHILE STILL STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE,**

**HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY FORGIVE THOSE WHO MADE YOU THEIR ENEMY?**

We can imagine the terror, but not fully realise that reality

unless we have experienced such trauma ourselves,

or to some degree, seen it happen first hand, in people close to us.

Last week, Bashar Warda shared his insights into that reality of trauma and what it means to offer forgiveness.

Bashar Warda has visited our parish one weekday some years ago.

He is Archbishop of Erbil in northern Iraq.

### WHAT HAVE BEEN THE TRANSFIGURATION MOMENTS IN HIS LIFE?

### HOW HAS GOD REVEALED TO HIM HIS CURRENT MISSION, A DEEPER PURPOSE IN LIFE TO UPLIFT A PEOPLE, HIS OWN PEOPLE, TO NEWNESS OF LIFE?

And to reach out to all people in Iraq.

His insights will seem very difficult for some to accept.

In the midst of his ministry to his people,

experiencing ongoing trauma, dislocation and loss,

he visited the USA and gave a talk at Georgetown University on February 15<sup>th</sup>.

He spoke of the challenges, of the damage done by ISIS and other extremists,

of some Muslim neighbours who have been helping survivors,  
and of the Christian gift of forgiveness  
and helping your neighbour to heal.

### MY INVITATION TO YOU

You are invited to read some of his insights.  
Call on the grace of God to listen and feel.  
Read them slowly.  
Pause after each one.  
And **PRAY** about it before continuing.

Bashar Warda says:

- *“We Christian people, who have endured persecution in patience and faith for 1,400 years now face an existential struggle. It is possibly the last struggle that we will face in Iraq,”*
- *“And, yet, we are still there, scourged, wounded, yet still there,”*
- *“While it is true that our numbers are small, the apostles were much smaller.”*
  
- *“We forgive those who murdered us, who tortured us, who raped us, who sought to destroy everything about us. We forgive them in the name of Christ.”*
- *“We say this to our Muslim neighbours, learn this from us. Let us help you heal. Your wounds are as deep as ours ... We pray for your healing. Let us heal our wounded and tortured countries together.”*
  
- *“We, Christians who have the good news and the forgiveness of our Lord Jesus Christ, I think that we could offer something. We can open our schools, open our educational centres even to those who tortured us and to tell them, ‘Please, listen to who we are and let us know who you are. Within educational institutions, we really have the chance to know each other better well and grow in tolerance and respect for each other.’”*
  
- *“We Christians should not remain passive or simply pray for the best, we too have a critical role to play.”*

Let us pray for Bashar Warda and his people and for their neighbours.  
And read the full article on his challenges to Islamic leaders and to the West -  
[Archbishop of Erbil: Christians in Iraq are ‘scourged, wounded, but still there’](#)

### OURSELVES

Bashar Warda speaks of the people of Iraq.  
But what about our lives here.

You are now invited to reflect on your own life **sometime early this week**.  
At least 20 minutes. 30 minutes or longer if you have the time.

**THINK ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW IN YOUR LIFE?**

**Allow God to give you the courage to name the realities of your life.**

**WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING?**

**WHO ARE YOU SEEKING?**

**WHO IS ACCOMPANYING YOU?**

**DO YOU EXPECT YOUR FRIENDS TO FULLY UNDERSTAND YOU AND YOUR PURPOSE?**

**WHAT EXPECTATIONS DO YOU PUT ON YOUR FRIENDS?**

Read the Gospel passage again, imagining you are one of the three friends of Jesus.  
See what God says to you. A word, a phrase, an image, a feeling.

**Then reflect on what ways you are graced by God,**  
and **what you know of your mission so far,**  
and what have been the **moments of God's transfiguring love in your life.**

Name some of the moments.

Record them where you can revisit them.

Seek your way forward with God.

**SIT WITH GOD, YOUR BELOVED.**

**AND CONCLUDE IN GRATITUDE WITH PRAISE TO GOD.**

Amen.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/022518.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook25022018>]

Article: Archbishop of Erbil: Christians in Iraq are 'scourged, wounded, but still there'

Painting: Transfiguration of Jesus – Carl Bloch - Public Domain

