

14th February

Transfiguration Sunday – Valentine’s Day

‘We know what real love is because Christ gave up his life for us. And so, we also ought to give up our lives for others . . . let us stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions. It is by our actions that we know we are living in the truth.’ 1 John 4.16,18

Opening Prayer

Loving God, we acknowledge that you are above and beyond our understanding.
Your thoughts are not our thoughts; your ways are not our ways.
You have created, sustain and are redeeming the whole universe.

We praise you for your greatness and your power, always used for good.
We thank you for emptying yourself of glory in the person of Jesus Christ,
and through him showing your unbounding love for the world.

Renew our faith and trust in you and give us grateful hearts for all you give us.
We pray in Jesus’ name, and say together the prayer that he taught his followers.
Our Father . . .

Bible Readings

Psalm 50.1 - 15

This Psalm calls us to acknowledge divine power exercised through the Wisdom and Word of God, and through the glory of God dwelling in the temple of Jerusalem. While the work of the Spirit is usually seen through God’s prophets (and after Pentecost, through the Church), the psalmist paints a picture of a more direct expression of power. It is an awe-inspiring image, which continues to intensify. In the end, unlike in some of the prophetic texts, the people’s sacrifices are not rejected, but God’s priority is the thankful trust of the Covenant people. Here God’s glory is seen in his justice – he is all knowing and all fair. But it is also seen in his love and care of the people. He wants people to trust him in times of trouble for it is by trusting in him that we will give glory to God.

Mark 9.2 – 9

The Transfiguration story proclaims the identity of Jesus as the Christ: in the presence of Moses and Elijah Jesus is seen as the one who fulfils the law and the prophets. We also come to see that Christ’s identity as different and more than that which was expected, as one whose reign is beyond, as well as within, his followers’ everyday experience. The Messiah is not only sent by God, as 1st Century Jews would have expected, but fully of God in a radical way. So, as at his baptism, from the cloud, a voice speaks, identifies Jesus as ‘my Son’, and tells Jesus’ followers to listen to Him.

Jesus’ Transfiguration gives a momentary glimpse ‘behind the veil’ of human perception into a different divine reality. It does seem to be a turning point in the story of Jesus where up till now we have heard of Jesus’ popularity among the people as they experienced his miracles and teaching, now we begin to hear of the growing opposition toward him of the Temple authorities. The disciples were still confused about who Jesus was. On this mountain-top experience Jesus’ disciples, in so far as they could bear, behold Jesus’ divine glory. Thus, when they later saw him crucified, they were able to understand Jesus’ voluntary self-

sacrifice, and proclaim to the world that his death and resurrection revealed God's overpowering love. The disciples wanted to 'capture' the moment with memorials on the mountain, but Jesus' focus continues to be on their commitment to following him through his forthcoming journey to the Cross.

What might we learn about love from our readings today? The mountain-top experience of the Transfiguration could be compared with the often 'first love' elation at the beginning of relationships, which we wish we could grasp, sustain, and live within forever, yet know that the everyday experience and practice of love is much more like giving, patience, sacrifice, and at times struggle. Some of you may have had a similar experience in your commitment to Jesus: an initial sense of joy, and then a lifelong journey of committed struggle as you endured difficult times. Troubles may have challenged your faith, but on the other hand they may have reaffirmed your initial 'high'. As we grow in our faith, we are able to remember our early perhaps more ideal faith, with different eyes, to recognise its truth as even more true, having been tested in the fire of the ups and downs of life.

This past year has been a challenge for many, some have lost loved ones, others have faced illness; we have all coped with the isolation of lockdown and had to adapt to social distancing guidelines. May we continue to be thankful and trust in God's constant love surrounding and upholding us and be ready to show God's love to others – to bring God glory. AMEN.

Prayers of Intercession

Recalling your goodness to your people through the ages we turn to you in our need. We name before you the desires of our hearts... [silent or aloud]

We pray for the needs of so many around the world, the victims of natural disasters, oppression and injustice, in Hong Kong, Myanmar, Russia, North India.

Loving God, we pray for all those who are unwell, those with Covid-19 and those with other illnesses. May you bring healing and hope.

We pray for those grieving the loss of loved ones. May you comfort and strengthen them. And we pray for all those who are struggling with insecurity and uncertainty and anxiety. May you give them your peace, which passes all understanding.

May the light of your glory lighten our path this day and every day, showing us the truth of your presence amid turmoil of the politics of this world. Turning to the tasks you have prepared for us, help us be the bearers of the good news of your steadfast love. Amen