



GOSPEL GOSSIP

'The appearance of his face changed...'

St Luke 9. 28-36

Sunday 2 March

It is said of the late Mother (St) Theresa of Calcutta that when she returned to her seat after receiving Holy Communion, her face was changed, and that it was also changed in the same way when she was ministering to the sick children in her care. There are more muscles in our face than in any other part of our body, and we alone of all God's creatures can so expressive through our features.

It's not just the expressions we can make, consciously or unconsciously, that are revealed by the appearance of our face. We may develop frown lines, or laughter lines. Our mouths may be upturned or else downturned as a default position. What we see in another's face, will determine what we think of them; how we look will determine how others see us.

In this passage, the event known as the Transfiguration, Jesus' face is changed, as was Moses' of old, by his encounter with God. Arguably St Theresa likewise.

- Do you expect to 'encounter' God?
- How do you know if you have?
- Is your encounter visible to others?
- Does your encounter reaffirm or cause anxiety?
- What if you feel you have never encountered God?

The Church of England uses this gospel as the last before the beginning of Lent, as if to affirm us on our Lenten journey with Christ, and to encourage us as we approach his Passion and death with him. It is a reminder of the baptismal calling we share with Christ, when God owns us as his children, as he did his own Son.

- What do you understand by the belief that in baptism you share in his death?
- Are you afraid of living out your Christian vocation so clearly that it is dazzling or off-putting to others?
- If you can see the effects of God in others, how does that affect you?
- When you get on a spiritual 'high' how easy – or desirable – is it to come down again?
- What does your face say about you – or your faith?

This is the last Sunday before Lent. Tough times await Jesus, and us. The story of the Transfiguration affirmed and encouraged Jesus in his vocation. We may not have such a vivid or dramatic 'transfiguration' ourselves, but we need to be careful not to overlook or discount the many mini-transfigurations that happen in our own lives, and allow them to be shown, for they are not our own glory but for God's. After all, would you rather seek to be transfigured or disfigured?