

The Transfiguration

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Acknowledgement of Land, Seas, Skies and Waterways

As I reminisce on times that I have made my way to the top of a mountain, I reflect on the spirituality of the First Nations people who connect so strongly to the place known as Australia. The land, seas, skies, and waterways formed elements of the Dreaming stories told by the ancestors since time immemorial to create their histories, cultures, and customs. I recognise that the First People's deep connection to Country is inextricably linked to their identity, and willingly journey alongside them towards reconciliation, truth-telling and healing.

Context of Prayer

A highly anticipated event in our region each year is the Great Pyramid Race, where athletes compete in a race to the top of Jarrugan (Scrub-hen nest) - otherwise known as Walsh's Pyramid - from the town centre of Gordonvale. I have nothing but admiration for the participants in this arduous climb, having proudly experienced this hike - at a much more leisurely pace though! This year it will be held on 5th August, which coincides with Sunday's Gospel 'The Transfiguration of the Lord'.



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Scripture

Matthew's Gospel account of the Transfiguration reads:

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

[Matthew 17:1-9](#)

Reflection

In the Christian tradition, mountaintops are spaces of encounter with the Divine. The ancient people's view of cosmology was that the heavens were above them, hence the symbolism of being on a mountain was that you were in closer proximity to God. My image of Jesus in this piece of Scripture was that he was radiating divinity. It also connects me to the First Testament story of Moses whose unveiled face was shining after his experience in the presence of God atop Mt Sinai [Exodus 34:29](#).

Challenges in life can be a struggle, akin to a journey to the top of a mountain, where the experience of working through everyday can be strenuous and somewhat disheartening. Yet if we have the courage and stamina to push through the barriers, upon reaching the summit, we are richly rewarded. Mountaintop experiences are peak events in life (if you will pardon the pun) – the thrill of accomplishment after the strain, the change of perspective that comes with the breathtaking views, and the recovery of self that takes time and rest. Mountaintop experiences are also pivotal moments for growth and enlightenment.

For Peter, James and John, this Scripture highlights one such moment. Upon hearing the voice of God, Jesus' identity as the Messiah was revealed, and as the Son of God, it was announced that he would suffer and die. Undoubtedly, this brought about a sense of foreboding for his closest disciples, heralding the rejection and persecution that lay ahead. Still, within this sorrow, there is a feeling of glory yet to come.

Contemplating difficulties that lie ahead can feel overwhelming, similar to those difficult moments on the climb, when the end seems unattainable; however, struggle can reveal our true strength. For believers, the words of Jesus can provide reassurance in challenging times: *Do not be afraid*. When we feel tested, our faith can serve to endure and overcome our troubles. Through our faith, there is hope. The Transfiguration gave strength to the apostles to endure the sorrow of the passion of Jesus, and the promise of what discipleship can bring to this life and beyond.

Prayer

O Lord,
You call us to go to the mountain top with you
And we follow, not quite sure of what is to
happen,
but we like mountain tops,
we like the view from up here,
we like mountain top experiences.
Lord sometimes we need mountain top
experiences with you
when our days are dark and dreary,
when our hearts, are heavy,
when the valleys seem more depressing than ever.
Lord, may this mountain top experience
fill our hearts with your light,



Jodi Simmons' Egg tempera on gessoed wood from [Sacred Art Meditations](#) Viewed 2nd August 2023

may we be filled with your love,
may we be filled with hope.
Lord, we are aware,
that just as Moses and your disciples
were changed by their experiences
that we too are changed and transformed
into the image of Christ by your mercy.
Lord, may we have unveiled faces that reflect your love,
your hope, and your light.
Amen.

Call to Action

- Contemplate the mountaintop experiences from your day using the Examen prayer practice:
 - Become aware of God's presence.
 - Review the day with gratitude.
 - Pay attention to your emotions.
 - Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.
 - Look toward tomorrow.

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit [2 Cor. 3:18](#).

Inspiration for Reflection...

- [Sacred Art Meditations](#)
- Brendon Byrne's "A Costly Freedom" (2008) St Paul's Publications
- Biblegateway

