



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

# FAITH CIRCLES

WEEKLY SMALL  
GROUP CATECHESIS

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD • YEAR A



*Fra Angelico, other names: Guido di Pietro and Fra Giovanni da Fiesole (1387–1455)*

## SUNDAY GOSPEL

### *Glory through Suffering*

MATTHEW 17:1-9

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone. There in their presence he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said 'it is wonderful for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.' When they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them. 'Stand up,' he said 'do not be afraid.' And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but only Jesus. As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order, 'Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.' ■

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

*Sr Sue Barker SGS*



This event of witnessing Jesus' transfiguration on Mt Tabor was a pivotal moment for the three disciples. Long after Jesus'

resurrection and ascension, in the days of arduous missionary travel and persecution, when they must at

times have had doubts that it was all worthwhile, it would be the memory of this event which sustained them.

Imagine the scene, "There in their presence, he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light." Terrifying? Awe-inspiring? Unforgettable? Probably a mixture of all of those feelings.

When Peter, James and John recovered from their initial fear (mentioned in St Luke's account but

not by St Matthew), Peter wants to stay in this almost ecstatic state. Surely most of us can identify with that desire to cling to our good experiences, to stay on the mountain and not have to return to the mundane of everyday life. Significantly, this story is placed in St Matthew's Gospel between two of Jesus' sayings about the suffering that will be required of himself and of his followers. Like the disciples, we are being encouraged and reassured that the daily dying-to-self which life asks of us will indeed end in glory. ■

## A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS



The gospel today presents the narrative of the Transfiguration of Jesus. Taking aside three of the apostles, Peter, James and

John, He led them up a high mountain. And that is where this unique phenomenon took place: Jesus' face "shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light". In this way, the Lord allowed the divine glory which could be understood through faith in his preaching and his miraculous gestures, to shine within him. The Transfiguration was accompanied by the apparition of Moses and Elijah who were "talking with him".

The 'brightness' which characterises this extraordinary event symbolises its purpose: to enlighten the minds and hearts of the disciples so that they may clearly understand who their Teacher is. It is a flash of light which suddenly opens onto the mystery of Jesus and illuminates his whole person and his whole story.

At this point in the gospel, Jesus is decisively headed toward Jerusalem where he will be sentenced to death by crucifixion. Jesus wanted to prepare his own for this scandal — the scandal of the cross — this scandal which is too intense for their faith and, at the same time, to foretell his resurrection by manifesting himself as *the Messiah, the Son of God*. Jesus was preparing them for that sad and very painful moment. In fact, Jesus was already revealing himself as a Messiah, different from their expectations from how they imagined the Messiah, how the Messiah would be: not a powerful and glorious king, but a humble and unarmed servant; not a lord of great wealth, a sign of blessing, but a poor man with nowhere to rest his head; not a patriarch with many descendants, but a celibate man without home or nest. It is truly an overturned revelation of God, and the most bewildering sign of this scandalous overturning, is the cross. But it is through the cross that Jesus will reach the glorious resurrection,

which will be definitive, not like this Transfiguration which lasted a moment, an instant.

Transfigured on Mount Tabor, Jesus wanted to show his disciples his glory, not for them to circumvent the cross, but to show *where the cross leads*.

Those who die with Jesus, shall rise again with Jesus. The cross is the door to resurrection. Whoever struggles alongside him will triumph with him. This is the message of hope contained in Jesus' cross, urging us to be strong in our existence. The Christian cross is not the furnishings of a house or adornments to wear but rather, the Christian cross is a call to the love with which Jesus sacrificed himself to save humanity from evil and sin.

The Blessed Virgin was able to contemplate the glory of Jesus hidden in his humanness. May she help us stay with him in silent prayer, to allow ourselves to be enlightened by his presence, so as to bring a reflection of his glory to our hearts through the darkest nights. ■

### TALKING POINTS

1. Have you, like St Peter, ever had a profound encounter or experience of who Jesus is, and longed to stay on the mountain top and not return to the mundaneness of everyday life?
2. Pope Francis explains clearly that the cross is the door to resurrection and how the mystery of the cross is a call for us to love, like Jesus did, giving himself completely. What is the cross, or *hard loving*, that you are called to do in your life?

### PRAYER POINTS

**Pray for Each Other:** Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them.

**Response:** *Lord it is good for us to be together with you, in this place. We put our trust in you.*

**Reflect:** Pope Francis highlights for us how the 'brightness' of the transfiguration enlightens the minds and hearts of the disciples. Pray now that you may more clearly know and understand who Jesus is, and surrender to his loving will for your life.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord of heaven and earth, full of power and majesty, we fall at your feet in awe, humbled by your love for us. Help us in turn to embrace the crosses you give each one of us, as the chance to be in solidarity with you. Give us the grace and self-control to love and serve others, especially when it is difficult to do so. Amen.