

Transfiguration of Our Lord (RCL/A): “Revelations, Blinding and Otherwise”
Exodus 24:12-18; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9
February 14-15, 2026
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Manasquan, NJ

Blinding revelations don’t come often. We may think they happen more often in the Bible than anywhere else. We may even think they happen **only** in the Bible, like Paul falling off his horse, going blind, and having scales literally fall from his eyes a few days later when his vision and his heart are both healed. The Transfiguration we hear about in today’s Gospel is a **literally** blinding revelation. Here’s a different angle on it, a poem by Madeleine L’Engle, whom some of you know as the author of the wonderful faith-based sci-fi trilogy, perfect for young readers **and** adults: *A Wrinkle in Time*, *A Wind in the Door*, and *The Swiftly Tilting Planet*. (She also wrote *The Summer of the Great-Grandmother*, a poignant memoir about her 90-year-old mother’s illness and passing.)

Transfiguration

Suddenly they saw him the way he was,
the way he really was all the time,
the glory which blinds the everyday eye
and so becomes invisible. This is how
He was: radiant, brilliant, carrying joy
like a flaming sun in his hands.
This is the way he was – is – from the beginning,
and we cannot bear it. So he manned himself,
[came as man to us]; and there on the mountain
they saw him, really saw him, saw his light.
We all know that if we really see him, we die.
But isn’t that what is required of us?
Then, perhaps, we will see each other, too.¹

So it was a mountain-top experience in more ways than one for Peter, James and John. They perceived, they “beheld” what had always **been** there but they had been too busy or distracted to see. Not that Jesus’ body had previously been supercharged and

glowing, but ever since they met Him He'd been **spiritually** "brilliant, carrying joy like a flaming sun in his hands." He is that for **us**, too, but do **we** see it, off the mountaintop, down in the plain, where we live most of the time?

Blinding revelations don't come often. Maybe we're thinking they happen more often in the Bible than anywhere else, like the Transfiguration. Maybe we even think they **only** happen in the Bible. But there **are** folks **here** who tell stories about scales falling off their eyes: suddenly, **or** gradually, seeing, "beholding," what the Lord means to them, requires of them, offers to them. Sometimes those stories describe getting into recovery from addiction. One of those people was our church friend, John Steele, who coordinated all the AA groups meeting in this building. John's blinding revelation came not on a mountain-top but in a car, half-way in a ditch, half-way in a local canal. John's hitting bottom became the moment of grace when he finally saw clearly that his marriage, his relationship with his children, his life itself, were more important than alcohol, and that alcohol had nearly destroyed all of it. Sometimes mountain top-type revelations come when we're "in the pits," not on a high. But the Lord is present for all of them: "radiant, brilliant, carrying joy like a flaming sun in his hands."

High mountains are traditional places of spiritual enlightenment, so it's no surprise that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on a mountain, that Jesus was transfigured on a mountain, that He gave the Great Commission (marching orders for His followers to go, baptize and teach) on a mountain before He ascends. Mountains have been called "the border zone between earth and heaven... the material and the spiritual."² This is also called *liminal* space: where the veil between earth and heaven is especially thin. These are locations where all kinds of people all over the world for thousands of years have

experienced a palpable sense of the divine Presence. We spoke about this at our Wednesday Bible study, and folks named places where this has been true for them: Assisi in Italy, Ephesus in Turkey, Hawaii, and their own church's worship space.

The places where we meet God most intimately, most powerfully, are where we're most apt to be "transfigured," to undergo a "metamorphosis" (the Greek word translated as *transfiguration*), to advance spiritually from being an egg to a larva (caterpillar), or from a caterpillar to a pupa (chrysalis), or from a pupa to a butterfly. When we're in the pits, we feel like a larva or slug. When we're on the mountaintop we feel like a butterfly. In our human lives, we go back and forth spiritually, unlike actual butterflies. Lent begins this Wednesday. It is the gift of time, the holy season of immense spiritual potential, that Mother Church gives us every year to seek out the liminal space where we can encounter God most intimately, most powerfully, and be transformed.

Jesus didn't decide that He preferred the company of Moses and Elijah to that of mere mortals or that He preferred glory to the hard work of ministry. He didn't decide to settle on or ascend from the mountaintop and send Peter, James and John down-mountain alone. In the afterglow of glory Jesus accompanied them back down and resumed His and their journey to Jerusalem and to the cross. The glimpse of glory was to sustain them in the shadows and in the darkness till the light of resurrection blazed forth on Easter and beyond.

The SOAR physical therapy signboard on Rte. 35 in Wall has great inspirational sayings. Currently it says, "If you want to fly, let go of everything that weighs you down." Ankle weights are simple to take off and barbells are easy to put down. On the other hand, unhealthy habits, familiar temptations, pleasant and fun pastimes that are fine in and of

themselves but leach our lives of time for truly important things are much harder to let go. What **are** the more important things? Loving God by regularly receiving the Body & Blood of Christ in Holy Communion, feeding on Scripture, being faithful in personal prayer, and serving our neighbor.

We're **all** called to holiness. None of us has arrived. Lent is a time to grow holier, as a community and as individuals. The "desert" of Lent (or the mountaintop if you prefer) is a place with fewer distractions, creating room, making time, granting vision to pare away what makes us less holy, and to add what could make us more holy. It has the possibility of being liminal space... described as "a spiritual position where we struggle, but where all significant transformation happens. It is when we have left the familiar, but have not yet arrived at the new. It is when we are between our old comfort zone and any possible new way of being. Let us not be persons of the past. Let us be informed by the past, but inspired into the future. Jesus goes ahead of us!"³ Jesus: "radiant, brilliant, carrying joy like a flaming sun in his hands" – if we only have eyes to see and grace to behold. Amen

¹Madeleine L'Engle, "Transfiguration" in *Glimpses of Grace*, p. 63.

²Douglas R.A. Hare, *Matthew (Interpretation)*, Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), p. 198.

³Ministry of the Arts "An Easter Prayer" (April 6, 2007, deptm@ministryofthearts.org).

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