**The Rt Revd Dr Flora Winfield, Bishop of Selby, reflects on Luke 9.28-36 for the Sunday next before Lent, 2nd March.**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. This Sunday, we're invited to reflect on the Transfiguration. It's a curious choice, in a way, for the Sunday next before Lent; for here, rather than a vision of sackcloth and sadness., we are offered glimpses of glory. Here in this story from the Gospel of Luke, Jesus and his disciples, in the in the days following the feeding of the 5000, and then Peter's momentum declaration in response to Jesus's question to him, “Who do you say I am?” And Peter replies, “The Messiah of God.” A credal statement. After that, Jesus begins to talk to his disciples about the cost of discipleship and to foretell his suffering and death and resurrection, saying, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

So that teaching in Luke's Gospel is followed by the start of our passage - it says about eight days later. About eight days later, Jesus and his disciples went up a high mountain and were set apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.

It's always impossible to describe those transcendent experiences, it's in their very nature. And yet, Luke is trying so hard to give us an account of this glimpse of glory that the disciples have received. Somehow, the disciples are afforded a glimpse of Christ's true nature, of his life in God, in the Trinity. Somehow, they're afforded a glimpse of his glory. And of course, also a response to the question that Jesus asked Peter the week before.

“Who do you say that I am?” This time, it's a voice that comes from heaven and says, “This is my son, my chosen. Listen to him.” It is a moment of affirmation of the identity of Christ and also a glimpse of heaven, of God's glory, here in Jesus, standing before his disciples with Moses and Elijah, and yet still recognisable as their friend and teacher.

A bewildering event, this coming together of the absolutely other and the absolutely present and familiar. There is a moment there which is both in time and out of time, of earth and of heaven. On that mountain, a place where all time and space comes together, as Jesus is revealed to his disciples in his true self and nature.

This is my son, my chosen. And the veil of flesh, which usually covers all that's glorious and wonderful about him in the normality of human life, is suddenly cast away for a moment, and they see the truth of his identity and the glory of God among them. Malcolm Guite captures this perfectly in his sonnet, ‘Transformation’;

‘For that one moment in and out of time, on that one mountain where all moments meet, the daily veil that covers the sublime in darkling glass fell dazzled at his feet. There were no angels full of eyes and wings, just living glory full of grace and truth. The love that dances at the heart of things shone out upon us from a human face. And to that light, the light in us leapt up. We felt it quicken somewhere deep within. And a sudden blaze of long extinguished hope trembled and tingled through the tender skin. Nor can this blackened sky, this darkened scar, eclipse that glimpse of how things really are.’

So let us, on this Sunday before Lent, pray that God shows us the love that dances at the heart of things, as it shines out upon us from the human face of Jesus. And that although the skies may seem dark - may be dark among us - somehow, glimpses of glory are always possible, always just within reach. Amen.