

Quinquagesima: Transfiguration Sunday

My dear Friends,

This coming Sunday is the 14th February, a day upon which some may be awaiting a card through the post, or even the gift of flowers or chocolates. How do you purchase such things which are non essential?! We learn from the media that online sales in such things are booming which is not good news for our local shops which normally do well leading up to St Valentines Day.

Valentine is not a saint which features in our liturgical calendar. We are not even sure which early Roman cleric out of two he was, a priest martyred in Rome in 269 or a bishop of Temi who was also executed in Rome. It is also curious why he is associated with lovers and romance. The best explanation is the centuries old belief that the 14th February, his day, was thought to be the time that birds chose their mates. If we venture out into our gardens or make our daily walks around the parks we can certainly see evidence of very active bird life. By the time of Chaucer and Shakespeare it was firmly established as a day for lovers.

Some reading these paragraphs might think they are beyond the days of Valentines but surely it can also be a day when we think outside our own concerns and needs. It might be the opportunity of showing friendship and kindness in making a surprise phone call or FaceTime visit? Such glimmers of light and love can make someone's day showing them they are not forgotten in these still troubled times.

Our Gospel this week does not deal with romance or marriage but refers to a life changing moment and an expression of the highest love. Jesus takes his closest disciples Peter, James and John and leads them up a high mountain. (Mark Ch 9). There he is transfigured, becomes dazzling white and is amazingly flanked by Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets. The whole scene is shrouded in cloud, a sign of the presence of God. As if this were not astonishing enough a voice is heard, "This is my Son the Beloved; listen to him!" This extraordinary event showed the disciples God the Father's recognition of Jesus and his relationship with him and emphasised our Lord's authority to which they should pay due attention.

The Transfiguration is regarded as a turning point in Jesus' ministry. However it is followed by him telling the disciples not to tell anyone about it and them all going back down the mountainside to resume their normal lives, at least for a time. We might experience moments of discovery of deep feelings and revelation ourselves maybe in a spectacular natural environment or in a holy place or even in the most unexpected location, we can be surprised by joy. God calling Jesus the Beloved shows us how unique he was but also how special we are to him as he gives us our Saviour to love us and care for us. Let us pray that we will share that love in our lives as we seek to follow him.

Best wishes and prayers

Stewart

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