

Dean's Letter, 3 March 2019

Dear Cathedral family, brothers and sisters in Christ

Some years ago, I spent New Year's Eve at the top of a mountain. We woke early the next morning to see beauty beyond words; stillness; the first glimmer of light; the tips of the sun's rays; a year in front of us. It was a moment to be caught up in glory and wonder. But, of course, like all mountain-top experiences, it did not last forever. We had to pack up our kit, shoulder our rucksacks, and head off down the mountain to return to all that was waiting for our attention.

Today, Transfiguration Sunday, is a "mountain-top" Sunday. Moses returns from Mount Sinai where he has received the tablets of the Law; his face is shining because he has been talking with God. Jesus and his three disciples go up the mountain to pray. There, Jesus is transfigured: his face is changed and his clothes become dazzling white. He is joined by Moses and Elijah. A voice speaks from the cloud, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

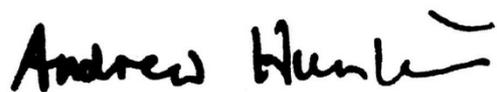
It is a highly symbolic account, filled with meaning: Moses represents the Law; Elijah represents the Prophets; they speak with Jesus about his "exodus" or departure – his impending death in Jerusalem; the cloud that overshadows them is the cloud of glory, the cloud of the presence of God that led the people of Israel through the desert (Exodus 13:21), the cloud that covered the Tent of Meeting (Exodus 40:34), the smoke that filled the temple (Isaiah 6:4). With the disciples, we are led into mystery and wonder. The voice of the Father speaks, as He spoke at Jesus's baptism (Luke 3:22); this time, however, the words are directed not to Jesus but to the disciples and therefore to us. We are to listen to the Son.

The Transfiguration comes, in St Luke's Gospel, just after the beheading of John the Baptist, the feeding of the five thousand, and the difficult words, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). This mountain-top experience is given to Jesus as he approaches his final trial and death; and it is also given to the "inner circle" of the disciples – and to us - to reassure them and to strengthen them.

We are led to the mountain top into this encounter with the glory and wonder of God. It is a powerful picture of prayer and contemplation. And, waiting for us when we come back down the mountain, is Lent, which starts on Ash Wednesday this week.

We are being joined, possibly from this Sunday, by our student placement team from the College of the Transfiguration. The group is smaller than last year. We look forward to welcoming them, getting to know them and, as always, holding them in our prayers. We also pray for Revd Lunga Dongwana as he prepares for his ordination to the priesthood, on Saturday 16th March.

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.