

2nd SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR B HOMILY ESSENDON 2021
TRANSFIGURATION UP HIGH, BUT THEN BACK DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

Mk 9.2-10 Gen 22.1-18 Rom 8.31-34

Life is precious but fragile, and it can take until we are hit by illness, accident, age or loss, that we are more inclined to realize this fact. When my maternal grandparents lived with us growing up, I recall Grandad Jack saying in his 80's, when I was in primary school: *'It seems like yesterday that I was a boy'*, and I didn't like hearing him say that he wouldn't be around in 10 years time. He did get to 88, but he was right in the end, of course!

These days, at funerals, we often have a slideshow reflection as part of the celebration of a person's life, treasuring the memories, particularly the joyful, happy and loving moments of family celebrations, weddings, births, anniversaries, graduations, Christmas gatherings, achievements and successes, holidays, fun times in general. I believe this can be an important aspect to the grieving process and letting go of someone who has been part of our lives, and who has helped influence who we are. Sadness and loss are part of the deal as we face up to the challenges and opportunities thrown up at us in life, at its various stages for all of us.

Just this week, I had a few spare moments to review my photo collection, of necessity, as my iCloud is overloaded, and so I had to work out how to reduce the nightmare 18,000+ photos and 1,000+ or so videos, to free up space up there for more shots. As I went through them, it brought back memories and reminders of good times with family, friends and travel, since my return to Melbourne from Sydney over 5 years ago now. The visual images evoke warm feelings and sometimes forgotten occasions and experiences with friends and family. The reality is, however, we can't live in the past (or stay up on *Cloud 9*, as we'll soon fall through it back to earth!), but that's not to say we can't take time out to remember and relive some of those happy moments in particular.

Today's Gospel of Transfiguration is up on the mountain top, where in biblical terms, God's revelation occurs, starting with Moses and the Ten Commandments on Sinai, and now Jesus is revealed in glory, as God's beloved Son, echoing the Baptism scene with John the Baptist, the voice of God, and the dove of peace descending, down by the riverside. The emotions of Jesus' inner circle are, at first, fear and awe, even terror, and then relief and peace, wanting to extend the moment, once they realize Jesus is alone with them, offering reassurance and encouragement.

We could interpret this experience as a high point, with Jesus' transfiguration a moment of moving forward, and growth in faith in him and his message. But, like us, enjoying a time of great happiness, love and joy in our lives, we have to move on to the more mundane realities of day to day life, with all its ups and downs and unpredictable things which can, and do, happen.

And so, Jesus continues to instruct or even warn Peter, James and John, as they descend the mountain back to normal reality, that life ahead is a tough journey, with his own Passion, Cross and death to be endured, before rising to new life. There is no fast forward button to fullness of life and glory with God, to eternal light, happiness and peace. The journey continues on the path of discipleship for you and me to persevere on this earth, for as long as we're here.

Just to offer a word on today's Genesis First Reading, one of my *least* favourite of all readings, where Abraham is asked to sacrifice his only son Isaac, but then, paradoxically been promised by God he will be the father of a great people, and here's Isaac as his only chance! Claude Mostowik MSC enlightens us, with the thought that this story is about breaking the bizarre Mesopotamian (ironically known as the earliest civilization!) cult of sacrificing first-born sons to their ancient gods, whereas the one God of the great nation of the Hebrews to come, is rejecting that inhuman practice. As we know, ultimately, God stops Abraham going ahead, with a new revelation on the mountain in Genesis, and down the mountain he and Isaac come, and on they go, into the unknown, and the future generations ensue.

This scenario is also countered by the teaching and practice of Jesus, who ***"expands the understanding of God with his calls to 'love one another, love the enemy, forgive one another, be compassionate and merciful, seek God's peace and justice.'"*** As they come down the mountain to walk the earth with the locals, so do

we, but not failing to celebrate the high points of life and be sustained and encouraged by the happy memories in our hearts and minds, committed to continuing the mission of Christian discipleship.

And now we have a short AV reflection on life in the Solomon Islands with Margret, a young deaf teacher, committed to educating and enabling others who are deaf.

We remember the Project Compassion theme for this Lent of 2021 is “Be more”, taken from Oscar Romero’s words: “Aspire not to have more, but to be more.” So don’t forget to contribute through your envelopes or boxes, or credit card or on-line donations.

john hannon

End of Summer!

28th February 2021