

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,  
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:  
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,  
While God is marching on.

That's what came to my mind this time around on the last Sunday after the Epiphany. The two big words of the day are there: glory and transfigure. Three glories in the Collect alone. And everything we pray or read in these propers points to the reading from Mark's gospel, the transfiguration of Christ.

Of course we read that on this day before we begin 6 weeks of Lenten reflection and self-examination. Of course we read it the Sunday before we remind ourselves of our mortality on Ash Wednesday. Of course we read it a week ahead of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness.

And all of this with good reason. Carl Jung, the great psychiatrist and mystic, held that some forms of depression are preludes to transformation and growth. My own experience tells me that some dark periods of unidentified sadness can be invitations for me to look inward, to pray for God's help, and to open myself to healing and growth. And the cycle repeats itself, just as these readings show a magnificent transfiguration—revealed glory—preceding temptation and persecution, preceding *the* transformation experience as we Christians understand it: resurrection.

Certainly this year—and it has been a year—of wondering and waiting and solitude—bears a collective and striking parallel to an individual's depression. We have endured, if not suffered, through this together. Together, as I have said *ad nauseam*, even while physically apart from each other.

We have learned, and continue to learn, what is most important for us as believing people, as followers of the way of Jesus. Whatever else it is, it is not simply what seems most desirable for us.

Those harsh words, “as he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,” is not far from the cyclical nature of life that I am trying to describe.

Christ has died that we might know, really know, that death does not hold the final word for us who believe. If you’re like me, you’re in no hurry to find that out by firsthand experience, but I, we, need to live with that assurance deep in our hearts. It was too much for Jesus to explain in a tidy, intellectual lecture.

Speaking for myself, I would love that! But no sooner than I type those words do I know how very foolish they are.

It’s not so much a matter of whether Jesus could have concocted such a lecture. It’s a matter that we humans couldn’t take it in even if it were presented to us.

So, the transfiguration. Even as we read Mark’s description of the experience we know we’re missing something in translation. Not the translation from Aramaic to Greek to Latin to English. The translation from heady understanding to heartfelt, deeply held experience of the spirit.

It’s as if the Church has us gird our loins for this season of Lent: y’all remember the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountaintop. It’s not unlike what Jesus himself repeatedly tells his disciples. But that’s not quite it, either. It’s not girding our loins, bracing ourselves for the harsh stories in Lent building to the events of Holy Week.

Whatever else *it*—the reason for our reading about this revelation of Christ’s glory—is, it can be for us a story about our own lives. Our life together as citizens of this world that

is going through an experience that affects us all. Our life together as the people of Epiphany. Our inner life, with all its inhabitants, seeking growth while walking through dark times, knowing that at the end, and all along the way, we are not alone, because it all happens “While God is marching on” alongside us.

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