

March 2026

Dean Peter writes...

Our journey through Lent has a particular shape to it, one that is revealed to us through the Gospel reading that many of us heard read in our churches on the Sunday before Lent, the story of Jesus' Transfiguration from St Matthew's Gospel.

When the Transfiguration is read to us, we stand in our imaginations on the top of the mountain with Jesus and his disciples, recovering our breath from the steep climb. That was my experience in the Holy Land many years ago when with friends we decided not to take the local taxis but clambered up the never-ending, winding road, regretting our decision to walk!

So, it is an inspired choice because a few days before Lent begins, we take in the view of the valley that stretches out below us, and we see a picture of the journey to come. Just as Jesus and his disciples would have looked toward Jerusalem from the mountain's summit, so we look to what is to come. In the distance we can see three crosses standing outside the city walls of Jerusalem. In our mind's eye we can see Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension and even beyond that the birthday of the church at Pentecost.

Before us we can see the winding path down into the valley which represents to us our journey through Lent, which is a spiritual pathway down the mountainside. The valley floor is Lent itself, the space the church creates for us through its promotion of personal discipline, fasting, bible reading, study and prayer for the next few weeks.

Spending dedicated time with God, wrapped around by activities that practise restraint, creates a deeper awareness of ourselves, our desires and our relationship with God. Lent is like entering a valley where the noise of the world decreases, where we become alert to the sounds of the countryside that we often fail otherwise to hear, and the stillness allows us to lift up hearts to God.

This is just one of the reasons why we read the story of the Transfiguration just before Lent begins, but there are deeper ones. Seeing God's glory in Jesus represents the goal of our journey as followers of Jesus as we encounter face to face the one who is fully human and fully divine. We glimpse our ultimate destination as Christians on the mountain of Transfiguration, but as Peter became deeply aware, on this earth we cannot freeze the moment but need to continue our journey. Seeing Jesus in his glory impels us to engage with the realities of our lives, our communities and of this world.

Jesus with his disciples descended the mountain and entered back into ordinary everyday life, no doubt with a fresh vision of God, but more aware of path towards the suffering, agony and death of crucifixion and the hope of resurrection.

And the words of God the Father from the cloud that settled on the mountaintop can also guide us on our Lenten journey. 'This is my Son, the beloved: with whom I am well pleased; listen to him'. Focus on the person of Jesus our Saviour and listen to God's voice to us through all that we do during Lent. On behalf of the Bishop's Leadership Team, I send my prayers for a profitable time in the valley of Lent, and as we anticipate our encounter with the crucified and risen one at Easter.

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