

# BEING TRANSFIGURED AND TRANSFORMED

## 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY LENT C

St Augustine is one of the most famous saints of the Church. Early in his life he felt drawn to the person of Jesus Christ and to the Christian way of life. But for a long time both lust and pride got in the way of him taking the plunge and getting baptised. Eventually, however, both he and his fifteen year old son, born out of marriage but named 'Adeodatus' (Gift of God), were baptised together in the Church of Milan. This took place on April 25th in the year 387.

Augustine has recorded in his memoirs called the '*Confessions*' two religious experiences which transformed his attitudes, person, and whole way of life. One has to do with a text from the bible, the other with music.

In the first incident, Augustine has thrown himself under a fig tree. He is depressed to the point of tears at the remembrance of his sins. He asks God how much longer God can put up with him. Then suddenly from a house near by, he hears the voice of a child calling out over and over again, '*Tolle, lege! Take it, read it! Take it, read it!*' Immediately Augustine stops crying, his whole face lights up, and he goes to the bible to take and read the first words he finds there. When he opens the book his eyes fall on these words of St Paul to the Romans: '*Let us conduct ourselves properly, as people who live in the light of day - no orgies or drunkenness, no immorality or indecency, no fighting or jealousy. But take up the weapons of the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop paying attention to your sinful nature and satisfying its desires*' (Rom 13:13). The message is overpowering. He can resist the Lord no longer.

A little while later, his determination to live as a Christian is reinforced by a second experience. This time it's the singing of the Christians in the church at Milan. He recalls the deep impression the singing made on him, and says to God in his memoirs: '*I wept at the beauty of your hymns and canticles, and was powerfully moved at the sweet sound of your people singing. The sounds flowed into my ears and truth streamed into my heart.*' Through the grace of God coming to Augustine in those two experiences he was changed, transformed - transfigured as a new person.

It's obvious from the gospels that people around Jesus expected him to change all kinds of situations. So they brought him their sick, their crippled, their mentally disturbed, their children, and many other concerns and worries. He healed some. He comforted and supported others. But as a general rule Jesus did not usher in an age of instant, total, and permanent change of situations. The grass did not grow any greener. The trees did not grow bigger fruits. The wheat in the fields did not yield bigger crops. The rain did not fall more abundantly. The sun did not shine any brighter. And not every sick person who came to him went home feeling better.

But some changes did occur with Jesus. There were changes in people themselves, including the changes that came over Jesus himself. There on the mountain he began to shine like the sun with the splendour and glory of God. In his new condition, he received encouragement from those great spokespersons for God, Moses and Elijah. In effect they were telling him:

*'Keep going. Keep up your good work. Persevere with your mission. Even if it leads to the agony of the cross, it will end in glory, the glory you are now experiencing.'*

Change comes over the friends of Jesus, Peter, James and John as well, who have seen the change in Jesus and who are overcome, puzzled and perplexed by it. The change that happens to them is deepened when they hear God speaking to them in the voice from the cloud: *'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him.'* What God is saying to them is this: *'Do what he tells you. Put into practice whatever he teaches you.'*

From now on those friends of Jesus see him in a new light. They take him more seriously as messenger of God and saviour. They also understand that a new world, a better world, must start with them, must start with their heeding that message of God to them: *'Listen to Jesus!'*

*'Listen to Jesus!'* That's a message for you and me too. Is there, e.g. someone right now who is driving us crazy? Is there someone with whom we are fighting? How does Jesus see them? What would Jesus do? What words of his apply to the situation? What do we hear him saying to us?

*'Listen to Jesus.'* Can we do that especially during our holy communion today, when he comes to us as our light, our strength to change us for the better? Only if we change and become better than we are right now can we hope to rise with him to a new, transformed and glorious state. May his influence on us in our holy communion with him today, assist us to overcome all fear and indifference, all selfishness and laziness, and anything and everything else that may be stopping us from walking with him on his journey to Jerusalem and listening to him along the way!

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