**Sunday before Lent Year B**

May I speak in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen.

Do you have a favourite Apostle? For me it is Peter, I love the way that he gets things so incredibly right and so incredibly wrong. Just before we get to the account of the Transfiguration in Mark’s Gospel, we hear of two of these scenarios with dear Peter. First, he has managed to proclaim so boldly; the first of the disciples to do so, that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God. Then almost in the next breath he has managed to say ‘no’ to the account that Jesus says of what is going to happen to him. How he must be crucified, how he must die. Peter rails against that with every bone in his body, as he says, ‘no that cannot be I will not allow you to die, that's not how this is supposed to end’. With the words ‘Get behind me Satan’ still ringing in his heart and his ears as he trudges up that mountain side. The going quite hard work as he slowly climbs towards the summit.

Prayer for us, let's face it, can sometimes feel a bit like that. We too can so easily be weighed down by our own failures to acknowledge God in our lives and to proclaim his Kingdom on earth. But what happens on the top of that mountain is quite incredible. Mountains all through the Old Testament have a particular place in the stories of revelation where God often encounters people on mountain tops. Moses and Elijah have had encounters with the living God before on mountain peaks but on those occasions, they have had to shield their eyes from the glory, the splendour, the beauty of God's presence, it is too bright they cannot bear to see it. Yet in Christ’s transfiguration they get to see fully the divinity of Jesus wrapped up in the humanity. The beauty, the transcendent Christ is also glimpsed by those frail disciples transfixed in fear. Their response is so human isn't it? If they had an iPhone, I suspect they would have desperately tried to video the whole affair. They try to hold onto it by building little shelters. They want this moment to last longer, where they see Christ as he really is and hear those comforting words from heaven. We too can be like that can't we? Those moments when we are caught up in prayer and feel God's presence. Those moments in a church or in a cathedral or at a pilgrimage site or looking out over a beautiful view. Those moments when we feel God is close to us. Perhaps those moments when we are the household of faith gathered with our friends, people we know and love who've walked this earth with us. It's not easy to step back down the mountain. Yet Jesus leads us towards his passion towards the cross towards death and towards resurrection.

We too can be transfigured with God’s love when we use seasons like Lent to increase our level of prayer, perhaps trying things like fasting or arms giving or anything that enlarges our heart and reduces the ‘I’ in each of us. We too can be transfigured not entirely for our own benefit but for the benefit of those that we will meet in our communities and world. If we spend time this Lent in prayer, seeking to understand more fully God's love for us then we will be in a much better position to walk with Jesus through the events of Holy Week. To watch as he washes the feet of his disciples and calls them friends. To watch as he says, ‘do this in memory of me’. To watch his horrific crucifixion, the lying of his lifeless body in the arms of his mother. To grieve with Mary Magdalene as she walks towards the tomb in the dawn, assuming everything is finished. finally to rejoice in Christ bursting from the tomb calling us by name and telling us that death and the fear of death should be banished forever as we walk in that new dawn light. So in this season of Lent let us drink deeply from our communication with God in prayer who always seeks to listen to us and is always waiting to greet us and lead us home.