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For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"  
who has shone in our hearts to give the light of  
the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.  
2 Corinthians 4:6

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What do you see when you look at yourself in the mirror? At one level people may make an observation about their physical appearance (and for some people this is really important). And so they will say things like, "I'm a little overweight", "I can see the wrinkles coming", "Turn the frown upside down", and so many other things. Of course, what is fascinating today is that we live in an image obsessed culture. How many people take how many 'selfies' today, which are the 'image' of 'oneself'...?

However, when we speak about 'Looking in the Mirror', we may mean this in a more metaphorical rather than literal sense. And so the question remains (but in a metaphorical sense), "How do you see yourself?" Here, with thoughtful and deep reflection, many people will speak of insecurities, failing, and hurts. How do you see yourself? Pause for a moment and think about it. What thoughts have you had about yourself today?

Did it ever occur to you that you have a relationship with yourself? We may sometimes think about this, you spend more time with yourself than with anyone else. Remember, you are the one person you never get away from. We all know how agonising it is to work day after day with someone we don't get along with, but at least that person doesn't come home with us at night. We can't get away from ourselves, not even for one second. So, how do you 'see' yourself?

When we honestly look at our own 'selves', we will see that we are all are flawed in certain ways. This is our reality (and if a person cannot realise those flaws then they are what some call 'narcissists') We all need to be 'honest' with our own selves. The challenge we all have is that we either do not fully realise those flaws, or we listen to our critical inner voice, we tend to exaggerate and berate ourselves for these flaws. We lose perspective and fail to live as God would have us, living our lives to the fullest. How do you see yourself?

In our Second Reading this day we hear this word: For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This phrase "in the face of Jesus Christ" is an important one for us. In Christ Jesus we actually see God at work in this world.

In Christopher Marlowe's Dr. Faustus there is this question, "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships and burned the topless towers of Ilium?" This is a question concerning Helen of Troy. You may recall the story Helen of Troy, the wife of Sparta's king Menelaus, who was acclaimed the most beautiful woman of Greece. The Greeks fought the Trojan War in order to get her back from Troy, where Paris, the son of King Priam, had taken her.

In our Bible Reading this day we hear of a far greater "face" (and here we are not speak 'literally', but figuratively – for we actually do not know what the actual 'face' of Jesus looked like!). But Jesus' face is such that He has launched a thousand, perhaps ten thousand times ten thousand, lives into an even greater experience.

In our reading for today we hear: *"For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*

What would we not give for one look at the face of Jesus? No face in all history has evoked so much human interest.

What would you have done if you had been there at Mt. Tabor with Peter, James and John? What is fascinating here is that the Apostle Luke records that when the Transfiguration first occurred, Peter, James and John were asleep (Lk.9:31). Matthew records that later the disciples fell to their feet when they heard the Father's voice (Matt.16:6). And after the Transfiguration the disciple were discussing what "rising from the dead" meant (Mk.9:10). Sleep, fear, questions... this is how the Transfiguration affected Jesus' disciples.

Now, our lesson for today (2 Cor. 4:3-6) follows on from the lesson for Transfiguration Sunday in Year C (2 Cor. 3:12-4:2). This develops further the good news of Christ's transforming glory. In the Old Testament, the focus was on *seeing* God's glory; the New Testament also speaks about our *participation* in it. Paul argues that the hidden (inner) glory of Christians under the New Covenant is greater than the visible glory experienced under the Old Covenant. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul declares that to behold Christ's glory is to be gradually changed into His likeness: *("We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate [or, 'reflect'] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit")*.

What does it mean to be 'changed' by the Gospel of Jesus? The Apostle Paul uses the noun "gospel" more than any other biblical writer. The Gospel both brings, and is, God's saving power (Romans 1:16) and grace (Galatians 1:6). This 'Gospel' (Good News) is the declaration of absolution and forgiveness through Jesus' atoning death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-5). This 'Gospel' (Good News) is forgiveness that restores the glory lost through sin. This good news, *"shines like a light and offers life that never ends (2 Timothy 1:10)."* 2 Thessalonians 2:14 says *"God called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

As we reflect on “How we see ourselves” in the light of the Gospel, it is also important to remember the events that followed Jesus’ descent from the Mountain of Transfiguration. Jesus spoke of His impending death. He then went and healed the sick (Mk. 9:14-29). And He faced renewed opposition by His enemies. But all along His eyes were fixed firmly toward the cross and the great Transfiguration before Him.

How do you see yourself...? How do you see yourself in the light of God’s holy word, and His love in Christ Jesus? How do you see yourself ‘changed’ because of Jesus? The word for today is ‘transfiguration’, and this means something has changed in appearance.

What does it mean for us to be ‘transfigured’? Is an Ugly Duckling transfigured if it grows into a lovely swan? Is an alcoholic transfigured by giving up the bottle? Are you and I transfigured when we fall in love? I would suggest that transfiguration doesn’t mean glowing in the dark (having some ‘extraordinary experience’ or ‘extraordinary ‘healing’), but seeing others (and ourselves) – in whatever situation we find ourselves – in a new way. What would we do, where would we be, if it were not for the Face of the One who resolutely walked toward Jerusalem that day so long ago?

Transfigured. Transformed. The Greek word is “metamorphosis.” “Meta” means change; “morphis” means form. Jesus’ form was totally changed. ... Like a cocoon is transfigured into a butterfly; like a flower bulb is transfigured into a lovely spring daffodil, Jesus revealed His divine glory. But that ‘glory’ was to go the way of the cross...

The Transfiguration is situated at the decisive moment when Jesus, having been recognised and proclaimed Messiah by St. Peter, reveals to His disciples how He is going to fulfil His work: His glorification is in His heart-breaking and gut-wrenching death. The glory of Christ is the glory of the cross. And this turns our view of the world (and our own ‘selves’) ‘upside down’.

Earlier Paul had spoken about how (2 Cor.4:4): *“the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”*. To be ‘transformed’, to be ‘transfigured’ means we have to ‘see’ our true human situation. We all are sinners, and one day we all will die. Maybe, just maybe, one of the reasons Peter asked to build tents on that mountaintop was that he did not want to go down into the valley again. With the revelation of God’s holiness, his own sin (and maybe his mortality) became all too apparent. And maybe Peter just wanted to bask in that glory rather than dealing with the realities of this life. But the glory of Jesus is the glory of the cross; and Jesus descended from that mountain into a valley.

You and I have been blessed. We have been blessed in many ways. In our world today we live like kings and queens of only a few generations ago. Our material comfort is great; our potential for knowledge and education is great; and our levels of health (and our life expectancy) is very good. But underneath

it all, the human condition remains the same. There is fighting; there is sin; there is death. We know, as Paul well expresses, *'the whole of creation is groaning'* (Rom.8:22). We may try to 'transform' our lives with diet, exercise, self-help books, visiting counsellors and psychologists and doctors, giving to the poor, and the like (and this is not to say that such things are not good – they are). But our human condition of sin and death is always with us. Yet Christ has changed everything – through His glorious death and resurrection. And thus, "we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Cor.4:18).

The Apostle Paul was led to say: *'For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'* Understand, that this little phrase right there before you – 'the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' – is your eternal hope. If you are familiar with the previous chapter, you remember Moses' glory got boring. People got tired of it, and it began to fade away over time. But the glory of Jesus will never fade away! Indeed, history confirms this. That is our eternal hope – to gaze upon the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The message we have is of Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth. He came into this world, took upon Himself our sin, and was raised to newness of life. And He shines a whole new way of life, and of seeing ourselves. May you live in the light of God's holy and forgiving and life-giving love in Christ Jesus our Saviour, now and always. Amen.