

2 Corinthians 3:12 – 4:2, Luke 9:28-36

We enter into Lent this week and the annual invitation to use this time to draw near to God. In today's epistle Paul comments on both of today's other readings. In Exodus, **Moses'** face is shining when he comes down the mountain after meeting with God, seeing God's glory, and receiving the 10 Commandments, so that he had to put a **veil** over his face; and in Luke's gospel, Jesus is **transfigured** into glory, shining brightly, on the mountain top. Paul says, *'when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.'* (2 Corinthians 3:16,18)

In the Old Testament times, before Jesus came, knowledge of God was hazy, God was distant, remote, and known through creation and the Laws and Commands he gave his people. But when Jesus came, it was as if a **veil** had been removed from the people's faces, now they could see God clearly, in Jesus Christ, they could hear him speak directly to them, see his authority over creation and people, his loving care and healing touch, his extraordinary example of humble service of others.

Paul is saying that before we come to know God, the things of God, the Bible, the sacraments, worship and fellowship, are mysteries to us, we don't understand them, it is like a veil covers our eyes of understanding, our minds struggle to comprehend God. But when God removes this veil of incomprehension, when we come to know the Lord, we begin a new life, *'in Christ'*, and then we begin to understand the Bible and the ways of God's people, the Church, we begin to be *'transformed'*.

Paul adds, *'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.'* (v17) We are **set free** by Christ to be able to understand the things of God and to grow in that understanding, to know God better, to discover the joys of the Christian life, and to understand ourselves better too. Knowing God sets us free from childish ways of thinking about God to actually see the reality of God's nature and his love for us, and to be transformed by God.

The Holy Spirit works in each person who is joined to Christ, seeking to change us, enlightening our minds, softening our hearts, strengthening our right desires, curbing our selfish wills, so that we might all grow a little more like Jesus.

Lent is an invitation to use our freedom to grow in our faith and understanding, to grow in love and hope.

How will you use Lent this year?

Will you spend time each day reading **Scripture** and meditating on it, turning what you read into prayer?

Will you **pray** for the Church and the world, and for those who especially need our prayers at this time?

Will you join the Lent **course**, joining with others to learn and share together?

Will you **fast** from some activity or food, to remind yourself of this season of restraint and self-examination?

Will you read a Lent **book**, (*books at back of church to borrow*) to learn about God and reflect on your life?

Will you set aside **money**, to give to those who have so little?

As we do these things, I pray that, as Paul says, we may be *'transformed.. from one degree of glory to another.'* And that we may be drawn closer to God.

In the words of the service for Ash Wednesday, *'let us keep a holy Lent'* this year.