

The Last Sunday after the Epiphany.

February 14, 2010

On this final Sunday before Lent the Epiphany theme of the manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God comes to a close with the account of the most striking manifestation of all, prior to the Resurrection. The Transfiguration of Christ was the turning point in his ministry, and for this reason it comes at this turning point in the Church Year.

In Luke's account, which we read this year, we are told that the conversation between Jesus and Moses and Elijah concerned his departure, which he was to perform in Jerusalem. In the original Greek text the word is *exodos* (Latin, *exodus*) which reminds us of the close relationship in meaning—as well as in time—between Passover and the dying and rising of Jesus. Luke also tells us a few verses later that it was at this point that he “set his face to go up to Jerusalem,” to his certain death. And so, today we set our faces to go through Lent and Good Friday in order to arrive at Easter.

The Old Testament reading gives us a parallel event in the life of Moses. In his encounters with God during his leadership of Israel, Moses' face was transfigured. The light of God shone forth from him.

In today's reading from 1 Corinthians, we have Paul's famous discourse on self-giving love. It is in that love which is the essence of God and the gift of God to us that God shines forth in us.

Today is the last Sunday we use *Alleluia* until Easter. In many congregations the final hymn is the ancient “farewell to Alleluia”. It uses the Old Testament Babylonian captivity as the image of our lives in this world and of Lent, looking toward the ultimate return of all people to God in the eternal Easter.

From *The Rite Light: Reflections on the Sunday Readings and Seasons of the Church Year*.
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