

## Transfiguration – 2023

78 years ago tomorrow / today, the world's first nuclear bomb detonated over Hiroshima; three days later, Nagasaki was hit. With "Oppenheimer," Hollywood raises again the debate about whether it OUGHT to have happened; but it DID happen, and the world has never been the same. So destructive was the power unleashed by those weapons that, although nations of the world still have them, they have – so far – never again been used; and we rightly pray that they will not. We frightened ourselves with a capability to destroy so overwhelming that, if we use it, we abandon control of it. We can choose whether or not to unleash it; but once we do, we cannot stop it.

Each year on the feast of the Transfiguration, I am struck by the imagery in Daniel's prophecy and Psalm 97, eerily foreshadowing those moments in 1945: flames and surging streams of burning fire; clouds and darkness; mountains melting like wax. ***But what Daniel and the Psalmist foresaw was not the intensity of destructive human power, but "the glory of the Lord"*** – a glimpse of God, Whose Kingship cannot be destroyed by ANY power, human or otherwise.

It was a brief glimpse of this same glory that Peter, James, and John were given in the Transfiguration, shining out brilliantly through the veil of Christ's human nature. ***The Transfiguration was not a change in who Jesus was; it was simply a revelation of what had been hidden from human eyes, the unchanged presence of His divine life and glory.*** Yet less than a week later, they would see this same Jesus scourged, mocked, and finally executed. Apparently, for all the wonders He had done, in the end He just was a helpless victim of religious jealousy and Roman capital punishment, defeated by human powers that interpreted His words and deeds as a threat to what they valued most. It is small wonder that the disciples were confused, and terrified. At the deepest level, two powers were pitted against each other there on Calvary – Satan's envy and pride versus the power of sacrifice, the gift of redeeming love – ***and***

*we must never forget that sacrifice emerged victorious. This too DID happen – the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection – and the world has never been the same.*

*Whether glimpsed briefly in glory, or and seen clearly in suffering and death, it was the same Jesus.*

Just as there was more to Jesus in His earthly ministry than met the eye, so too for us ... we are made in the divine image, and hidden beneath our human weakness and imperfection *is a child of God.*

Sometimes, we too are given glimpses of Christ's glory in the beauties of nature, in the eyes of a child, in the kindness of a stranger, in the joy of helping another. And sometimes, our lives are marked strongly by the mystery of the Cross. God speaks both from glory and from the cloud. *This Presence of the divine Son continues in the Eucharist – the same Jesus the Apostles saw is given to us – today, neither revealed in visible glory nor in suffering, but in the deepest humility, hidden beneath simple appearances of bread and wine.* We are strengthened by the Gift of God's life so we can live in hope for the day when the Lord returns to conclude history with all its sadness and loss, and open to us the future of endless joy.

We might not often feel very powerful, but each of us in fact has been given power in our lives – power over our choices, power over our words and actions, power over our abilities and our possessions. We can wield that power for good or ill; to build up or tear them down; to serve others, or to use them. In an uncertain world, we can be tempted to prefer ourselves and our advantage. But every act of love and compassion is a revelation of the greatness within us. In moments of decision, when we must choose how to use our power, may we too hear the voice of the Father: *“This is My beloved Son ... listen to Him.”*