

**Reflection on the Gospel-Feast of the Transfiguration Year A
(Matthew 17:1-9)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

The Feast of the Transfiguration takes precedence over the 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time and features its own particular readings. Today we are invited to reflect on a transformative moment in the life of Jesus as experienced by his closest followers. It is important to note that Matthew's account of the "transfiguration" is loosely framed by reminders that Jesus is to suffer and eventually to meet a violent death (16:21 and 17:23). It would seem that Jesus' three companions, Peter, James and John, get a glimpse of God's glory shining on his face and penetrating even his clothing, a hint that God's grace is more life-giving than the forces of violence and opposition to God's reign. They see Moses and Elijah, the key prophetic figures of Israel, speaking with Jesus, God's new and definitive prophet.

The "transfiguration" seems to point to a time in Jesus' ministry when he comes to terms with the fate he is likely to meet: if he continues to confronts the forces of oppression and injustice, he is certain to encounter opposition, even death. He struggles with that realisation in the wilderness at the outset of his ministry. He comes to peace with what it involves on the mountain top. Peter wants to hold on to the experience of glory, to "make tents" for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. He prefers not to face the difficulties involved in fidelity to the mission. But that is not the way of discipleship. Rather, he and his companions are called to "listen" to Jesus, the beloved of God.

Like Jesus and his companions, we too need the occasional glimpse of final victory. We also need the good sense to listen and to follow through on the path that brings life to all the earth's inhabitants, despite the pain. We can feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenges facing us and by the opposition we experience from the most unexpected quarters. If we are to sustain the struggle for a healthy, safe, and peace-filled world, we have to resist the temptation to hold on to the experience of glory, and come to terms with the personal cost of going all the way to Jerusalem, to the place of victory. We might take time this Sunday to consider the challenges facing us as contemporary disciples. According to the 2017 International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) Report, almost three quarters of a billion people have less than \$US1.90 per day to meet all their basic needs for food, shelter and security, even as the gap between rich and poor in our world is widening. Only when we willingly accept the pain of relinquishing our hold on an unfair share of the world's resources will we understand the meaning of this feast.