

In case it's escaped your attention, I'm a man. Us men tend to think through life events with a left brain perspective, such as what's a logical reasoning of it or how do we make some sort of grounded sense of what we've experienced? As imaginative and fresh his thinking may seem to us, this is something that the poet Mark Jarman also shares and bears with us men.

The sporting world has radiated a great deal of glory of late. In July, Andy Murray firmly put to bed any idea that his Olympic and Wimbledon wins were just a fluke for us plucky, underdog Brits. He was the member of Team GB chosen as their flag bearer in last night's Olympic opening ceremony in Brazil. It's easy to understand a nation's feel-good factor in the light of such deserved glory.

It's an uncomplicated step for me to rationalise the Transfiguration in these rather antithetical, mundane terms – what took place was the exclusive exposure of divine glory to Jesus and a handful of his closest disciples. This other-worldly moment reminded our Lord that his true glory was to be revealed through the cross' shame, his annihilation and the Father's resurrection power. Understandably, the disciples had no words to explain what they'd seen until much later. We've just heard an attempt in Peter's second pastoral letter to explain it, a letter that was sent out at least 20 years *after Peter's death*. In a nutshell, we have a bite-sized, easily digestible message to add to other Gospel morsels. But perhaps that nut needs to crack open again. Perhaps I need to rethink the events of the Transfiguration with a right brain, arguably more feminine perspective, to sit with the disciples in this moment of awe and wonder, to give myself permission to spend more quality time in that cloud on that mountain top.

When I recently focussed more on the Transfiguration's glorious glow than its 'meaning', I remembered a very personal moment of Transcendence. It took place in the presence of a good friend of mine who was close to death. As fellow pastoral priests, Amanda and I had worked closely to arrange details for an annual St Luke's Service of Healing. Very sadly, she had been given a very late diagnosis for aggressive cancer and thankfully I had one last chance to say my goodbyes. I still remember the warmth of the glow that radiated from her frail, bloated body all these years later. How do I explain this instance of bitter/sweetness? I try not to.

Perhaps it is far more effective to keep my mind's eye in that place where medicine could do no more for her body but where her soul embodied Christ's eternal, unquenchable light.

Through seeing Christ's Transfiguration in the same bitter/sweet spiritual mode, I'm transported back to the Nativity where shepherds and wise men were drawn to a child's transcendent gaze by hosts of angels and a roving star. But, at the same time, I'm also huddled with a few men who are about to flee from the Garden of Gethsemane and abandon the Messiah in his moment of agony.

So what's today's takeaway from these confessional reminiscences? I've been here long enough now to know that we can readily adopt a Western, Protestant, left-brain struggle to make sense of the many elements of our shared faith that lie just beyond our grasp.

We can find ourselves rationalising Mystery that's radiated through Scripture and Sacrament by presenting a set of mundane options – 'it can mean either this, this or this' or we simply dismiss Mystery altogether because it doesn't fit into our ordered, methodical worldview. We see issues in our church's life that trouble us so we get to work in order to find solutions. Perhaps, even at this 11th hour, we need to spend time with those disciples on the mountaintop to give over control of our destiny firmly into God's hands. With that in mind, the Vestry will soon be inviting every member of this church for an away day at the beginning of September. Thomas Brauer, our Diocesan Missioner, will be guiding us through a Mission / Action / Plan process. This may sound familiar to you from years now past but there will be a very different feel this time around. We'll have the chance to sit together before God to think about some questions that can lead us into God's divine Mystery. On our return, we will, by faith, be in a better place to shape our on-going practical action for the communities in which we meet and whom we serve. I now invite you into a period of silent reflection which will end as the final stanza of the poem which began our sermon.