

If I say 'Father Christmas' and wait for a moment or two, you will all have an image of Father Christmas in your minds... and every one of them will be different because you are all different people; they may have something in common – like a red suit and hat and white beard – but your image of Father Christmas will be yours and nobody else's. If I say 'the Lord Jesus', exactly the same thing will happen. And it happens because human beings are makers of images.

The gospels inspire us to make images that carry meaning: every account of Jesus' teaching and life on earth becomes an image in our hearts that carries meaning. That's why we are image-makers: because we need meaning. The only kind of suffering we find unbearable is that which seems to have no meaning. Viktor Frankl said the only people who survived the horrors of Auschwitz were those who managed to find or create or believe in some kind of meaning – even in the hell of the camp.

We will also make images in our minds and hearts of today's gospel account of the Transfiguration. We will all have a different image or picture or idea of it – but that doesn't matter in the slightest: it will be ours and nobody else's and it will carry meaning for us.

The image is to be contemplated, thought about, reflected on within ourselves – then it opens onto the divine, like a door or a window, onto the reality beyond the image. Or a photograph: if we sit long enough looking at a photo of

someone we love or care for, we can almost feel them with us.

Thinking about and looking at our image of the Transfiguration can begin to transfigure ourselves: it can transfigure our love for another person into a realisation that it's actually God we love in them. It can transfigure our giving into a recognition that we should be grateful to the person in need, for giving us an opportunity to love God in them. And it can transfigure our prayer, so that all our distractions and wandering thoughts can be taken up by God and shaped into something beautiful.