

The Transfiguration of the Lord is an epiphany. Life is full of epiphanies. An epiphany means a 'revelation' or a 'showing' and it is the revelation and showing of the true nature of a person or a thing. On the Feast of the Epiphany, just after Christmas, we celebrate the revelation of the true nature of the baby in the manger – which is the Son of God.

The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan is also an epiphany: Jesus is revealed as the one to come, the forgiver of sins, the Messiah.

The Transfiguration reveals the true nature of Christ in Jewish scripture. Appearing with Elijah – who is the father of prophets – and Moses, the giver of the Law – Jesus is revealed as the sum total and completion of the law and the prophets.

Now, what did Jesus himself say about the Law and the prophets? In the gospel of Matthew he says:

'To love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commandments' (Matthew 22:37–40).

Therefore, the Transfiguration reveals Jesus as the sum and completion of love.

But this not just any old kind of love. It is the divine love which will drag us, kicking and screaming if necessary, into the everlasting life of God; it is the love which will never give up on us, never lose hope in us and never grow tired of waiting for us. It is the love which sees everything that is good in us, despite all the bad. It is the love that understands us as we can never understand ourselves. It is the love that is the only remedy for self-disgust, a sense of unworthiness, worry and fear.

Especially fear, because fear is the opposite of love, not hate. You can't love what you fear or fear what you love.

When the psalms speak of 'fear of the Lord' they mean wonder, reverence and awe – and these belong to love.

When today's gospel says that "the disciples fell on their faces overcome with fear" it does not mean they were frightened – It means they were overcome with wonder, reverence and awe. And that's a completely different thing. The Transfiguration first and last, is about love.