

Notes for a sermon preached at St Paul's, Rondebosch 2 March 2014 by Bishop Margaret Vertue of the Diocese of
False Bay

TRANSFIGURATION ST PAUL, RONDEBOSCH

THANKS FOR INVITATION AND WELCOME

HAPPY MEMORIES OF BEING MEMBER OF CONGREGATION. MRS POSTER, LESLIE MUNRO, MOLLY MACGREGOR

REVD WILMA JAKOBSEN AND MYSELF. FIRST WOMEN PRIESTS, OPENING WAY TO WOMEN BISHOPS

ST PAUL'S RONDEBOSCH HAS BEEN PART OF THIS HISTORY.

GREETINGS FROM FALSE BAY DIOCESE. CONGRATULATIONS ON 160TH YEAR

FEAST OF TRANSFIGURATION

DEACON: EARTH SHATTERING. PARADIGM SCATTERING, SOMERSAULT FLIPPING EXPERIENCE

IS THAT TRUE FOR US?

OR ARE WE LYING LOW OVERCOME BY FEAR. JESUS TOUCHES YOU AND SAYS... GET UP AND DO NOT BE AFRAID.

HAVE WE AS INDIVIDUALS AND CHURCH LOST FACE OR FAITH?

ARE WE OPEN TO THE MIRACLE OF CHANGE OR HOLDING ON TO OUR WOUNDEDNESS

TO BE TRANSFIGURED IS TO BE CHANGED

ARE WE OPEN TO BEING TRANSFIGURED, TO BEING CHANGED, TO BEING TRANSFORMED?

2 PETER 1:16-21 MEN AND WOMEN WILL BE MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SPEAK GOD'S WORD,
TO STAND ON THE WORD OF GOD, TO PROPHECY! TO BE A MIRROR OF CHRIST'S GLORY!

THAT WAS NOT THE LAST OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

IT IS SERIOUS ENOUGH WHEN THE CHURCH 'LOSES FACE'. BUT IT IS A DESPERATE SITUATION WHEN THE CHURCH
LOSES FAITH'.

IN OUR SPEAKING AND PREACHING, ARE WE ALIVE, VIBRANT, EFFECTIVE AND CHANNELS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

JESUS SAYING TO US TODAY, GET UP AND DO NOT BE AFRAID

LIKE US, DISCIPLES WERE WOUNDED BY DOUBT AND GRIEF; FEAR AND FAILURE, A SENSE OF INADEQUACY.

WHAT IS YOUR WOUND?

WHAT IS THE WOUND OF OUR SOCIETY..... RAPE, GANGSTERISM

ARE WE OPEN TO THE MIRACLE OF CHANGE. OR ARE WE LOSING FACE AND FAITH?

I KNOW THAT THERE ARE HIDDEN ENERGIES IN YOU AND ME WAITING TO BE RELEASED,

YET OUR PEOPLE AND SOCIETY SEE A PATHETIC LACK OF THE WIND AND FIRE OF THE SPIRIT,

SEE VERY LITTLE TRANSFIGURATION AND TRANSFORMATION.

YOUR PATRON SAINT HAD AN EARTH SHATTERING, PARADIGM SCATTERING, SOMERSAULT FLIPPING EXPERIENCE'..... AN EXPERIENCE OF TRANSFIGURATION

ARE WE WILLING TO ADAPT AND BE OPEN TO LIVE OUT THE QUALITIES, VALUES AND CONCERNS OF ST PAUL.....

THE PRIME BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH IS NOT TO PRESERVE ITSELF AS AN INSTITUTION, IT IS MORE COSTLY THAN THAT,

THE COST IS THAT THROUGH OUR SPEAKING, BEING AND PREACHING, WE ARE TO BRING PEOPLE TO A SHATTERING CONFRONTATION WITH GOD THE FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT.

PEOPLE ARE TO BE SHAKEN UP TO KNOW JESUS AS THEIR MASTER AND FRIEND

WE ARE TO GIVE OURSELVES WITHOUT RESERVE TO THE GRACE AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THEN JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION AND THE MIRACLE OF CHANGE AND TRANSFIGURATION WILL HAPPEN

THEN LIKE ARCHBISHOP DESMOND WE CAN TRULY SAY, WE HAVE NO ENEMIES

THEN WE CAN LET GO OF OUR WOUNDEDNESS.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS READY TO EMBRACE US, FILL US ANEW.

ARE WE READY, EXPECTING AND WILLING TO RECEIVE THE AWAKENING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

ARE WE WILLING TO NOT JUST BE 'NICE PEOPLE' BUT 'NEW PEOPLE'

NOT PEOPLE WHO HAVE LOST FACE OR FAITH BUT PEOPLE OPEN TO THE MIRACLE OF CHANGE.

CHANGE AND TRANSFIGURATION THAT WILL BE SEEN BY THOSE AROUND US.... AN EXTRAORDINARY SURGE OF NEW LIFE.

OUR PEOPLE WILL KNOW THAT DRUGS, SEX BEFORE AND OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE, ALCOHOL, GANGSTERISM, GAMBLING IS NOT THE ANSWER.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR STRENGTH IN TIMES OF WEAKNESS

OUR GUIDE IN TIMES OF DOUBT

OUR CONSOLER IN TIMES OF SADNESS EG. ANENE MOTHER, DELFT, FARMWORKERS STRIKES

THE OPPOSITE OF THE SPIRIT IS BAD TEMPER, REFUSING TO BE RECONCILED, TO HOLD ON TO WOUNDEDNESS.

ST PAUL AND THE DISCIPLES WE READ ABOUT ARE NOT UNLIKE US, THEY WERE ALSO SCORNE AND EXPERIENCED THE CRUELTY OF LIFE, THEY WERE ALSO CASUALTIES OF SOCIETY
THE CHURCH BORN OF THE SPIRIT CRASHES THROUGH ALL KINDS OF BARRIERS.

IS YOUR CHURCH LIKE THAT OR DOES IT STAND COLOURLESS AND POWERLESS BEFORE GOD?

NOT OPEN TO TRANSFORMATION AND THE MIRACLE OF CHANGE.

THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT HAD 'POWER'..... COME HOLY GHOST OUR SOULS INSPIRE!

LET US CONSIDER THE THREE DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE TRANSFIGURATION:

1) THE FIRST IS EXPECTANCY. DRAWING APART WITH OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR

PETER, JAMES AND JOHN WERE GATHERED TOGETHER WITH JESUS. DISCIPLES WAITING FOR A NEW PHASE OF MINISTRY TO BEGIN

THEY COULD NOT AND WOULD NOT LOSE FACE OR FAITH

BY OUR PRESENCE HERE TODAY TELLS ME THAT THERE IS A DEEP ROOTED LOYALTY TO THE CHURCH BUT HOW MUCH 'EXPECTANCY' IS IN THE CHURCH TODAY.

WHEN OUR PEOPLE COME TO WORSHIP DO THEY HAVE A VIVID FEELING OF BEING ON THE MOUNTAIN TOP, THAT THE SERVICE IS GOING TO PROVIDE A MEETING POINT WITH HEAVEN/

THAT THEY ARE GOING TO RETURN HOME HAVING GOT THEIR PRIORITIES RIGHT, THAT THEY HAVE FOUND STRENGTH AND THE GRACE TO COPE WITH THE WEEK AHEAD/

OUR HOMES AND CHURCHES MUST NOT BECOME TOO COMPLACENT AND COMFORTABLE, LEAVING LITTLE ROOM FOR THE SPIRIT TO MANOEUVRE, MUCH LESS TO BECOME A BLAZING FIRE.

I AM NOT SPEAKING OF SPIRITUAL ENTERTAINMENT, THE SPIRIT ALSO SPEAKS IN THE SLENDER SILENCE.

WHEN WE SPEAK ABOUT RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE, WE NEED TO OPEN THE WINDOWS OF OUR SOUL TO THROW OUT ALL OUR PREJUDICES AND PRECONCEIVED IDEAS.

WE NEED TO BE OPEN TO THE MIRACLE OF CHANGE. TRANSFIGURATION

IT IS NOT FOR US, IN OUR INTELLECTUAL CONCEITS. TO DEFINE WHAT GOD CAN DO AND WHAT HE CANNOT DO.

HAVE FAITH IN GOD. FAITH HUMBLER AND TUMBLES US. FAITH LAUGHS AT IMPOSSIBILITIES.

THE FIRE WITHIN US CALLS TO FIRE WITHIN GOD.

THE WELLS OF EXPECTANCY ARE NOT DRIED UP WITHIN US.

LET US BE OPEN TO EVERY CALL OF THE SPIRIT. THOSE WHO EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM GOD WILL ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS FOR HIM.

THIS IS HOW THE CHURCH BEGAN AND HOW IT WILL CONTINUE.

2) THE SECOND CHARACTERISTIC OF THE TRANSFIGURATION IS TO BE OPEN TO HOLY LIVING AND TO BE EYE WITNESSES FOR JESUS.

PAULINES, TO BE ABLE TO DO THIS, YOU ARE TO DEVOTE YOURSELVES TO PRAYER.

WITH THE DECLINE IN FAITH AND LOSING FACE, THERE HAS BEEN A DECLINE IN PRAYER.

THE CHURCH NEEDS TO GET TO ITS KNEES AGAIN, TO WAIT UPON THE MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRIT.

WE HAVE THE REALITY OF SMOKE AND TONGUES IN OUR CHURCHES BUT ARE THEY THE RIGHT KIND? IT IS THE RIGHT KIND WHEN THERE IS RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE; WHEN THERE IS UNITY OF MIND WITH CHRIST. LISTEN TO THE STILL SMALL VOICE. BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD..

THE SPIRIT WILL MAKE US WITNESSES TO HIS WISDOM, POWER AND GRACE.

3) ON WEDNESDAY WE MOVE MORE DEEPLY INTO AN EXPERIENCE OF TRANSFIGURATION AND TRANSFORMATION. ON ASH WEDNESDAY THE EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON REPENTANCE.

REPENT AND YOU WILL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

REPENT OF LACK OF RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE.

REPENT OF THE MERE VENEER OF CHRISTIANITY, OF GROSS SELF SUFFICIENCY.

REPENT THAT OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A MERE SHADOW OF THE REAL THING.

THE THRONE OF THE HEART, WHATEVER THE COST, MUST BE GIVEN TO CHRIST.

WE MUST BE WILLING TO BE NOTHING, THAT CHRIST IN US MIGHT BE EVERYTHING.

NO POINT IN CONSCIENTIOUSLY PRAYING TO GOD TO FILL US WITH HOLY SPIRIT. WHEN WE ARE ALREADY FULL WITH SOMETHING ELSE.

'BLESSED BE THE PURE IN HEART. FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD'. GOD SEARCHES OUR HEARTS.

FRIENDS WE ARE ONLY TO HAVE A PLAN 'A' FOR ANOTHER TRANSFIGURATION TO HAPPEN IN OUR LIVES...

LET GOD TAKE OVER AND BE OUR ONLY INSPIRATION, THEN HEAVEN'S GLORY WILL BREAK THROUGH AND WONDERFUL THINGS WILL HAPPEN IN OUR LIVES, OUR FAMILIES, OUR CHURCHES.

OUR CHURCHES WILL THEN NOT LOSE FACE AND FAITH. THE BURNING BUSH WILL NOT BE CONSUMED.

WE WILL NOT BE IRRELEVANT BUT WILL BE AGENTS OF RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE.

WE HAVE A CHOICE TO MAKE

ARE WE LIVING SPIRIT FILLED OR SELF INDULGENT LIVES;

ARE WE OPEN TO THE MIRACLE OF CHANGE OR HOLDING ON TO WOUNDEDNESS:

ARE WE EXPECTANT: PRAYERFUL AND REPENTANT.

THE SAME HOLY SPIRIT WHO WORKED THE MIRACLE OF CHANGE IN THE APOSTLES, BIDS US LIVE.

RECOGNISED OR NOT, THE RISEN CHRIST REMAINS CLOSE TO EVERYPERSON, EVEN THOSE UNAWARE OF HIM. HE IS THERE IN SECRET. A FIRE BURNING IN THE HUMAN HEART, A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS, HE LOVES YOU AS IF YOU WERE HIS SOLE CONCERN.

GET UP AND DO NOT BE AFRAID. WHEN THE DISCIPLES LOOKED UP THEY SAW NO ONE EXCEPT JESUS HIMSELF ALONE.

LAAT ONS BID:

HERE, DIT IS ONS TROOS DAT U ONS LIEFHET, LANK VOORDAT ONS U KEN OF KAN BEMIN. DIT IS ONS TROOS DAT U VIR ONS BID, LANK VOORDAT ONS NA U DRAAI OF MET U PRAAT. DIT IS ONS TROOS DAT U GEES IN ONS WOON EN IN ONS BID SONDER DAT ONS DIT WEET. ONS LOOF EN PRYS U VAN DAG WEER DAARVOOR. AMEN