

Moses descending from the mountain is transfigured by his meeting with God face to face; his own countenance is brightened, so that the sons of Israel cannot bear to see it.

This transfigured humanity is not altogether unknown to us. We have all felt the awesome power of another person's goodness or love, and felt unworthy to raise our eyes in their presence. Each of us remembers the experience of being detected in some dereliction or wrongdoing, when we knew our unworthiness and the justice of others. But this shining on the face of Moses is directly from God; his prophet is illuminated by his encounter with God, and it is this that makes his fellow-Israelites cover their eyes.

We are to think of a meeting between God and his chosen prophet that overwhelms us, and our own listening to the Word of God should have something of this quality. When we listen to the words of the Gospel at Mass, we stand, and sign ourselves with the cross to honour God's presence in the Word, his presence in Christ the Word, his inspiring of Matthew who wrote our Gospel today. These are all *reflections* of the light of God which brighten our understanding of the human beings who are illuminated. Any parish priest will tell you that he knows the holiness of his parishioners, and that he is sometimes silenced by their own encounters with God. As yesterday we acknowledged that the glory we give to God doesn't mean that we are humanly glorified, still to the eyes of faith the reflected glory of God can shine in figures even crushed with the burdens of justice, of love, of generosity. The obedience that crushes them is conforming them to the Son of God, who could be *seen transfigured talking with Moses and Elijah about his Exodus, which he would accomplish in Jerusalem.*

That this glorious light is hidden from most people's eyes is perfectly in accord with the way God works. Jesus himself is *made lower than the angels* in his incarnation, so that we may thoroughly know his closeness to us, his oneness with us: his inglorious death is the last, perfect act of solidarity with human kind. But once we have seen it, this utter submission of the self to the love of God, it becomes the benchmark of what it means to be human. No earthly splendour can compete with it, no earthly beauty can eclipse it; it is the pearl of great price, the hidden treasure that changes the value of all things; once we know where it is, we will delightedly sell everything we have to buy the field.