

Dear Friends,

Have you ever spent ages trying to figure something out, only to have a flash of inspiration just when you have forgotten all about? Some people call it “a light-bulb moment”. Often it happens when we least expect because light-bulb moments come from unconscious mind. We cannot bring them on, but we can welcome them all the same. Sudden clarity may lead to a burst of energy or renewed sense of purpose.

The eighteenth century British engineer James Brindley often had to rely upon inspiration. He was the first of the great canal-builders, pioneering techniques that had never been attempted before. One of his light-bulb moments was a simple but brilliant idea called “contouring”. Building canals thru hillsides involved earth-moving on a massive scale. It suddenly occurred to him ... why cut thru the hill when you can go around it?

Light-bulb moments are not confined to engineering. It is possible to have a light-bulb moment about a person. We may suddenly see someone “in a new light,” as they say. It is not that they have changed in any way. More likely, we have by spending more time with them, or listening more attentively to what they are saying.

Peter, James and John saw Jesus in a new light, literally so, when they accompanied him onto the Mount of Transfiguration. Mountaintops in the Bible are places of revelation; of encounter with God. It was on a mountain that Elijah called down fire from heaven; on a mountain that Moses received the Commandments. Coming down from the mountaintop, the face of Moses shone.

People had been speculating whether Jesus might be another Moses or Elijah or even John the Baptist. The disciples were unsure. Their confidence in Jesus had been shaken recently. His earlier popularity seemed to be waning, and he kept talking about suffering and death. Then, suddenly, here on the mountain, they saw him speaking with Moses and Elijah. He was radiant with light. It was wonderful for their Master to be in such company.

The mountaintop can be a metaphor for any transitional space where things or people are seen from a new perspective. We do not have to climb mountains for this to happen. A time of prayerful meditation can offer such a space. This Lent, we may like to spend time alone with Jesus, listening to him as our heavenly Father bids us. The thought may not appeal to everyone. Some might even share the disciples’ terror, for the voice of Jesus can be a challenging one, urging us to forgive and pray for our enemies. It commands us to love, and there may be something inside us that resists. Rather than build Jesus a shelter, some might prefer something more robust: to keep him safely contained!

However, it is not possible to compartmentalize our lives. The bright cloud of God’s glory reaches out to wherever we may be. Today’s Gospel describes how heaven keeps spilling over into our world. In revealing Jesus in his divinity, it calls us too, to be holy as well as human. We are all sons and daughters of God, all beloved, and though we may pass unnoticed in a crowd, there is in each one of us a little of the glory seen in Jesus. There will be moments when other people notice something different about us; moments, too, when we become suddenly aware that the person next to us is more special than we thought. It all depends on how much we let them shine!

Your friend in Jesus

Msgr. Zach