

August & September 2019

We are constantly being reminded by the Church's calendar that while the new life of the Resurrection begins here and now, what Dante refers to as "the love that moves the sun and the other stars" is a reality which transcends time and space itself. God is the mystery which lies beyond, but also a presence who in hints and allusions is always trying to break through into our own experience.

Two Feasts, one at the beginning of August and one at the end of September, help bring this home to us. August's feast is that of the Transfiguration, where Jesus, facing his passion and crucifixion, is revealed on the mountain top to the inner circle of his apostles in the divine glory of his Resurrection. September's is yet more mysterious still, being the Feast of St Michael & All Angels, the yearly commemoration of the unseen messengers of God who, Scripture says, do his will and wait upon his presence.

They remind us in poetry and metaphor that the greatest reality there is, is one which we cannot now see and touch and feel, but is all around us nevertheless.

The challenge, of course, for us is always that of holding on to belief, without having physically seen, without having been there on the mountain top, without having been given a vision of angels, and having to accept a faith that has been handed down to us. But we never really just accept a historic tradition without personal experience; it's not just a matter of blindly accepting the witness and experience of others without anything of our own contributing to the mix. We have to come to Christ in a developing, deepening relationship which makes sense to us as people living when and where we do - knowing what we do about ourselves and the world and the make up of the physical universe.

We can't pretend to live in the ancient world, or the medieval period or, for that matter, whatever part of the last five hundred years appeals most to us, however much we feel we have in common with the past.

Living faith, authentic tradition, isn't just handing on the dying embers of the experience of the past, but picking up a living flame and nurturing it and running with it and handing it on, and this kind of internalisation - if I can use a rather horrible word - can only come about by making those, on the surface, small choices (which are not really small choices at all), those small choices of belief and practice day by day, through prayer and reflection, by choosing to at least attempt to look at the world through the eyes of love.

Fr Michael