

## Collect, Readings and Reflection for 15 February 2026, Sunday next before Lent

### **Collect** (*the Church's prayer for today*):

Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross:  
give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **Readings:** 2 Peter 1:16-end; Matthew 17:1-9

*This week's Reflection is by Reader, Peter Gillions.*

In this passage we see a remarkable moment that inspired the disciples and can inspire each of us.

To understand what was happening it is helpful to reflect on Alexei Navalny. He was Russia's most prominent opposition leader for a decade, **and** a fierce critic of President Vladimir Putin. In August 2020, Alexie was poisoned at the end of a trip to Siberia with a Novichok nerve agent. He survived after undergoing specialist treatment in Germany. He promised that when he recovered, he would return to Russia. His family and supporters knew that the same regime that had attempted to murder him once would do so again. But he said '*I don't want to give up my country or betray it. If your convictions mean something, you must be prepared to stand up for them and make sacrifices if necessary*'. So he left his family in the safety of the West and returned to Russia. Put yourself in the position of one of his family or friends. What would you have said to him. The most natural thing to do is to dissuade him from going, to ask him to take another path. One man facing a powerful and murderous regime will only end in one way.

Yet he returned to Russia in January 2021 and was immediately taken into custody. Alexie spent the remaining three years of his life in prison; he died in prison. Only now has evidence been produced that shows he was once again poisoned. Alexie is one of the very few remarkable individuals who are prepared to stand against a corrupt regime despite the risks. And one of the very many such individuals who end up being crushed by it. His life is gone. The corrupt regime is still in power. You may ask if it worth it?

In the rather passage about the transfiguration those exact same fears were in the hearts of the disciples of Jesus. John the Baptist had not only raised expectations that long promised Messiah was about to appear but had directly pointed to Jesus. What

most people imagined the Messiah would do was also clear – He would liberate Israel from the Romans and establish God's rule in the land. That is why the disciples were quick to leave their jobs and follow Jesus – God was doing something in that moment there and then. It was happening in front of their very eyes with Jesus. They saw miraculous healing, heard Jesus speaking with authority using powerful stories and witnessed him reaching out to those on the margins of society.

Yet there were still lots of ideas that were swirling around about who Jesus really was. Was Jesus just another teacher or the long-promised Messiah?

So Jesus had finally asked his disciples “Who do you say I am?” And it was Simon Peter who famously answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus tells Peter he is right and orders his disciples not to tell anyone. The reason for this is that Jesus knew only too well what people expected of the Messiah – a conquering King – was very different to the path He was taking.

As it says in the previous passage *‘From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.’*

So it is clear why fear grips the heart of the disciples on their journey as each day they get closer to Jerusalem. Then after six days Jesus takes three of the disciples Peter, James and John, and leads them up a high mountain by themselves. In scripture mountains were places where people encounter God and that is exactly what happened. Jesus begins to radiate light and two figures from the past appear – Moses and Elijah. Moses the great leader who gave the Law of God, the path to living a godly life, to the people of Israel. And Elijah the greatest of the prophets, prophets who called God's people to repent and turn to God. This is extraordinary. Here are two figures from history present with Christ in that same moment. We have moved beyond time to the eternal realm that includes all time. Heaven is breaking in to earth. This continues as a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, *“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”* This is the exact same message as was heard at the baptism of Jesus but then comes one important addition. *“Listen to him!”*

*“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”*. As the disciples continue on the journey to Jerusalem with Jesus, they carry this instruction to *“listen to him”* with them. Perhaps they find some hope in it. But surely that hope was extinguished as events unfold. As with Alexie, the might of the established powers decide to end his life. Jesus was to be taken to Golgotha, a hill chosen so that those crucified there were on public display. And there Jesus dies, yet another leader who challenged those in power and is crushed. But of course, for Jesus that is not the end of the story. As we say in the Easter acclamation “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.”

Life after death is totally unknown. There are no stories about Alexie being seen again. But Peter makes it clear this is no fairy story. He wrote *“For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain” (1Peter 1)*

Looking back at the Peter, James and John seeing witnessing all that happened on that remarkable day when something heaven came to earth perhaps the simplest point is that God was revealing himself to reassure them. In the difficult days ahead, they had already had a revelation that Jesus really was the Messiah.

There are all sort of theories around why these individual disciples were chosen. The important point is that they shared the journey and that remarkable experience together. Jesus’ call is a call to community, to be in supportive relationship with each other. Christ said it was by this all men will know you are my disciples that you love one another. Sometimes that will be rejoicing with those who rejoice, other times it will be weeping with those who weep. We are never expected to believe exactly the same as each other, but we are called to love one another as Christ has loved us. And to share that love we have received.

The words spoken to the disciples *“This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him”* Remind us of who Jesus is, of God and beloved of God. And we have the privilege to be able to listen to Him.

There are times on our journey of life when life does not work out as we might hope or expect. Like the disciples we may be fearful and struggle to see the way ahead. But just as Gods presence descended in a cloud on the mountain so too Gods presence has come to each of us by His Holy Spirit. Jesus walks with us on the road of our world’s suffering. We do not walk it alone. And we have the encouragement of our companions here, companions, those with whom we share our bread. Jesus told his fearful disciples *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* Let us encourage one another.

Amen