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THE BULLETIN - READINGS

11 February, Sunday before Lent

Collect for Sunday before Lent

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.

Collect for Ash Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

2 Kings 2:1-12: Elijah Ascends to Heaven

Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?' And he said, 'Yes, I know; keep silent.' Elijah said to him, 'Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.' But he said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they came to Jericho. The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?' And he answered, 'Yes, I know; be silent.' Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.' But he said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.' Elisha said, 'Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.' He responded, 'You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.' As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, 'Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the

minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Mark 9.2-9: The Transfiguration

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!' Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

<p style="text-align: center;">Readings for 18 February, Lent 1, are: Genesis 9:8-17; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1.9-15</p>

Women who wouldn't give up *by Rodney Nicholson*

100 years ago last Tuesday some women got the vote. Women over 30 who were householders, or married to one, or university graduates – about eight million in total - were enfranchised, along with nearly all men over 21. Universal suffrage came ten years later. Suffragists, the peaceful demonstrators, led by Millicent Fawcett and others had achieved general parliamentary support for women's votes, but nothing actually happened.

The Women's Social and Political Union, led by Emmeline Pankhurst, whom the Daily Mail mockingly called "suffragettes", used militant tactics in their impatience to get things done. Arson, smashing shop windows, slashing famous paintings, attacking MPs such as Winston Churchill, then a Liberal, whom one suffragette assaulted with a riding crop, were among their methods. The suffragettes never killed or seriously injured anyone, although they themselves received cruel and degrading punishment. Without their violence, however, and without also the First World War and David Lloyd George, women would not have got the vote when they did.

Today the suffragettes are universally praised, with women MPs of all parties, from Theresa May to Harriet Harman, voicing their gratitude. If, however, we put the clock back to the turn of the 20th century, we would probably find most church members disagreeing with women voting. Many would have agreed with Queen Victoria who condemned "the abominable folly of women's rights", or with Florence Nightingale who in 1867 declared, "I have never felt the want of a vote." Opinion can change if a courageous and determined minority leads the way. Another determined group of women, the leaders of the so-called Headscarf Campaign in Hull, have been honoured for their part 50 years ago in bringing about changes in the fishing industry. Three Hull trawlers sank in atrocious storms between 18th January and 4th February 1968, with the loss of 58 men. Lillian Bilocca and her comrades demanded new safety measures from the trawler owners but, mainly interested in their profits, the owners dismissed the fishermen's wives, who got scant support from the men either. "What do women know about it?" Lillian and her team took the train to London and demanded to see the prime minister, Harold Wilson, and members of his government, with the result that all their demands, including that of a radio operator on every ship, were immediately met. Sadly, when Lillian Bilocca died at 59, hardly any but her family came to the funeral. Let us praise women, and men, who have fought for justice.