

LAST SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY, YEAR A, TRANSFIGURATION, FEBRUARY 15, 2026

Madeleine L'Engle, best known for her novel *A Wrinkle in Time*, spent more than thirty years as the librarian at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City. In addition to writing, she raised three children with her husband, Hugh Franklin, an actor and occasionally traveled. On one trip to Egypt, she asked a guide why there were so many carvings of vultures, crocodiles, and cobras in the temples. The guide answered simply: "Because the Egyptians worshiped what they feared."

They worshiped what they feared. It is easy for us to imagine that we are more enlightened than ancient civilizations. But if we are honest, we are not so different. We still worship what we fear.

To worship something is to give it power. It is to let it shape our decisions, dominate our imagination, and determine our boundaries. And fear—when it is left unchecked—demands our devotion. It consumes our thoughts. It shrinks our compassion. It narrows our world.

History proves this again and again. We have feared those who were different from us and called that fear wisdom. We have feared outsiders and called it patriotism. We have feared ideological opponents and called it righteousness. The Mongols were feared for their warfare. Native Americans were feared and driven from their lands and had cultural assimilation forced on them. Communists were feared in the 20th century leading to intense government scrutiny of individuals with many of them being blacklisted. Jews and Catholics were accused of destroying society. Immigrant groups of all kinds were feared and scapegoated from the Chinese laborers in the 19th century to the Irish, Italians, Polish people to the Germans during the 1940s and the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. African Americans were enslaved and oppressed under systems built on fear. And today, fear of "the other" still drives suspicion, prejudice, and hostility.

Over and over again, fear becomes the altar at which we bow. Fear is powerful. It triggers fight, flight, or freeze. It narrows our vision until the world becomes as small as our own survival. When we are ruled by fear, transformation cannot happen. Growth cannot happen. Love cannot happen. When fear takes control, we stop listening. We stop seeing. We stop becoming.

And that is precisely why today's Gospel is so urgent. On the mountain of Transfiguration, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with him. Suddenly his appearance changes—radiant, dazzling. Moses and Elijah stand beside him. The moment is overwhelming, holy, and terrifying.

Peter doesn't understand what he is seeing. So he does what we often do when we are afraid: he tries to control it. "Let's build tents," he says. Let's contain this moment. Let's preserve it. Let's manage it. Then the cloud descends. The voice of God speaks. And they fall to the ground in fear.

But the voice does not explain the mystery. It does not outline a five-step plan. It says only this: "Listen to him." That is the antidote to fear. Not build something. Not control something. Not run from something. Listen. When fear threatens to rule us, God does not give us an argument. God gives us a voice. The voice of Jesus.

And what does that voice say? Jesus' voice shouts to us throughout scripture.

When anxiety overwhelms you: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.”
When greed dominates the culture: “What does it profit to gain the whole world and lose your soul?”

When injustice seems immovable: “Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me.”

When lies grow louder than truth: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

When you are exhausted: “Come to me, all who are weary.”

When resentment tempts you: “Forgive.”

When pride seeks the spotlight: “Whoever wants to be first must be servant of all.”

When the future feels uncertain: “Do not worry about tomorrow.”

When the impossible stands before you: “With God, all things are possible.”

Do you hear the pattern? Jesus’ voice always moves us away from fear and toward trust. Away from scarcity and toward generosity. Away from hostility and toward mercy. Away from self-protection and toward self-giving love. Discipleship is nothing more—and nothing less—than learning to recognize that voice above all the others.

And there are many other voices. Voices that shout through our screens. Voices that profit from outrage. Voices that divide for power. Voices that tell us to protect ourselves at all costs. Voices that say there is not enough. Voices that say some people matter more than others. If we are not intentional, those voices will shape us. And we will begin to worship what we fear.

To “listen to him” means we must sometimes mute the noise. It means practicing silence. It means returning again and again to Scripture. It means asking, in every heated moment, every political conversation, every anxious decision: Does this sound like Jesus? Because Jesus’ voice does not humiliate. Jesus’ voice does not dehumanize. Jesus’ voice does not scapegoat. Jesus’ voice does not incite fear. Jesus’ voice heals. Jesus’ voice restores. Jesus’ voice calls us beloved. Jesus’ voice transfigures.

And here is the miracle: the more we listen, the more we become like the One we hear. The disciples went up that mountain confused and afraid. They came down still unsure of what lay ahead—but they were no longer alone in their fear. They had heard the voice. And the voice changed them.

We are called to a voice-activated faith. Today, the voices around us may not say, “This is my Son.” But they do cry out, “I need help.” “I am afraid.” “My children are hungry.” “I am sleeping in my car.” “Do you see me?” If we are listening to Jesus, we will hear him in those voices too. Because listening to him means becoming his voice in the world. It means being less selfish than we were yesterday. More generous. Less reactive. More compassionate. Less ruled by fear. More ruled by love.

We are God’s beloved children. And beloved children do not have to live in fear. So when the clouds gather, when the noise rises, when fear tempts us to build walls instead of bridges, remember the voice from the mountain: Listen to him.

And as we listen, may we be transfigured—changed from fearful people into faithful people, from anxious people into courageous ones, from divided people into reconciling ones—until our lives themselves become echoes of his voice. Amen.