

Homily 2nd Sunday in Lent 2026

‘The Transfiguration – A Theophany - A Manifestation of God.’

I remember a TV programme, hosted by Eamon Andrews, called ‘What’s My Line’. I’m sure many of you will remember it. Members of the public, with rather obscure jobs appeared on the show and out of the sight of 4 celebrity panel members, wrote their ‘line’ of work on a board. The panel’s job was to find out the person’s occupation by a series, yet limited number, of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ questions. They hoped these questions would narrow down the contestant’s occupation by a process of elimination which would eventually REVEAL their job.

In today’s First Reading from Genesis God begins to reveal himself to Abraham. God’s REVELATION is that he is a God who seeks out his children. He* is a God of relationship. He is a God who requires us to trust and have faith in him, even when we don’t fully understand what he expects of us. He is a God who will constantly protect us and shower us with blessings beyond all human imaginings.

The Responsorial Psalm REVEALS our God as a God of love and mercy who will never let us down. He is a just and righteous God who will always provide for his children and save them from harm. This salvation, according to The Second Reading from St Paul to Timothy, is realised and perfected in the person of Christ who died to free us from sin and death. Paul also REVEALS a God who calls each of us to holiness through love of our neighbour.

The fullness of God’s REVELATION, according to St John, is made manifest in the person of Jesus, ‘He who has seen me has seen The Father.’ (Jn 14:9). So, Jesus, REVEALS God as a humble foot washing servant. He is a compassionate, merciful, loving God who subjects himself to humiliation and pain for our transgressions. He is a God who does so whilst we are still sinners. He is a God who will fully overcome sickness, death, natural disasters and evil when his Kingdom is perfected at The Second Coming.

In today’s Gospel the Theophany of The Transfiguration REVEALS God, in Jesus, as the perfection of The Old Testament Law and the fulfilment of The Old Testament Prophecies (presence of Moses and Elijah). It is in the person of Christ that the promise made to Abraham is full realised. The Transfiguration also REVEALS God as mystery, Father Son and Holy Spirit, but one God (all present at The Transfiguration).

So just like the contestants and panel on ‘What’s My Line’ God gradually REVEALS himself to us and no more so than in the person of Jesus. However, just like the occupation of some of the contestants, God’s full nature will remain mystery until the final day when ‘Christ will come again.’ How stunningly beautiful is the REVELATION of our God!

*God is also revealed as She in Holy Scripture:

In Holy Scripture, God is most often referred to using masculine titles (“Father,” “King,” “Lord”), yet many biblical passages also use feminine imagery, metaphors, and grammatical forms to describe God’s nature and activity. These portray divine qualities through maternal, nurturing, and feminine symbolism.

Here are the main ways Scripture describes God in feminine terms:

1. God as a Mother or Nursing Parent

Several passages explicitly compare God’s love and care to that of a mother.

Maternal compassion

- Isaiah 66:13 —
“As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.”
God’s consolation is directly likened to maternal tenderness.
- Isaiah 49:15 —
“Can a woman forget her nursing child...? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.”
God’s faithfulness surpasses even a mother’s bond with her infant.

1.2 Birth imagery

- Deuteronomy 32:18 describes God as the one who gave birth to Israel:
“You forgot the God who gave you birth.”

Here God is portrayed as both father and mother — creator and bearer of life.

2. God Compared to a Woman in Labour

Scripture sometimes depicts God with imagery of childbirth — powerful, creative, and painful love.

- Isaiah 42:14
“Like a woman in labour I will cry out.”

This portrays divine action as intense, life-bringing struggle.

3. Divine Wisdom as Feminine (Sophia / Ḥokmah)

One of the strongest feminine portrayals of the divine appears in Wisdom literature.

3.2 Lady Wisdom

In Proverbs 1–9, Wisdom is personified as a woman:

- Proverbs 8 — Wisdom speaks as present with God at creation:
“I was beside him, like a master worker.”

In Hebrew, ḥokmah (“wisdom”) is grammatically feminine, and this figure later influenced theological reflections about God’s nature.

In Christian interpretation, some early theologians connected this figure with Christ or the Holy Spirit while retaining feminine imagery.

4. God as a Protective Mother Bird

God's protection is described using feminine animal imagery.

Deuteronomy 32:11

Like an eagle hovering over its young.

- Psalm 91:4
"He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge."

Mother birds sheltering chicks symbolise, nurturing divine care.

5. God's Womb-Like Mercy (Hebrew Language Insight)

A key Hebrew word for mercy reveals feminine symbolism.

- "Raḥamim" (mercy/compassion) comes from "reḥem", meaning womb.

Thus, biblical compassion literally carries maternal connotations — mercy flowing from womb-like love.

6. Feminine Imagery Applied to the Holy Spirit (Interpretive Tradition)

While Scripture itself does not explicitly call the Holy Spirit female:

- The Hebrew word "Ruach" (Spirit) is grammatically feminine.
- Some early Syriac Christian writings used feminine pronouns for the Spirit.

This is linguistic and symbolic rather than doctrinal gender assignment.

7. Jesus Using Maternal Imagery for Divine Love

In the New Testament, Jesus applies mother imagery to divine longing:

- Matthew 23:37
"How often I have desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings."

Here divine love is explicitly maternal.

Key Theological Principle

The Bible ultimately teaches that God transcends human gender.

- Genesis 1:27
Humanity — male and female — is created in God's image.

This suggests both masculine and feminine qualities reflect aspects of God's nature.