

## **Caterpillar to Butterfly**

μεταμορφόω, metamorphoo, is a koine Greek word meaning after-form-keeping-with-inner-reality. In English, we get the word metamorphosis from this Greek word.

Consider a caterpillar. A caterpillar goes along merrily eating. Eventually, it stops eating and undergoes a metamorphosis. Its body hardens on the outside, the insides of itself literally turn into goop. And from this goop it transforms - changes forms - into a butterfly.

A butterfly remembers being a caterpillar. One study taught caterpillars to associate a smell with electric shocks.<sup>1</sup> Once these caterpillars were butterflies, they then avoided that smell. They remember negative memories. Another study taught caterpillars to associate a smell, colour, or pattern with sugar and goodness. Once again, when they were butterflies, they remembered that smell meant a treat. They carry good memories across the transforming.<sup>2</sup> Even though they literally are transformed and refigured at the cellular level. So they have an after-form, but it keeps with their inner reality. A metamorphosis.

English divides metamorphoo into two similar but different words. Transformation - like what a butterfly does - and transfiguration.

Transfiguration is not a change in form, but a change in how someone or something is viewed or understood.

Imagine- you know someone who always seem up to no good. One day, you learn about the trauma they have experienced in the past. It doesn't justify their cruelty today, but it changes the way you view them. Now you don't think they're just born evil. Now you think they're a victim who is making victims. Your perspective has changed. They haven't.

Or imagine you have a role model. And you want to be like them. You read their words and copy their deeds and look up to them. And one day, you discover them doing a horrific act. Your mind cracks - on one side is the person you know and love, and on the other is this person you don't know and dislike. Yet they are one and the same. You can't face them in the same way you could in the past.

I know I used to think my papa was so cruel for always saying he hated cats. He'd get kid me in a tizzy with his words. And then, one day, I caught him sitting and tenderly petting a cat. I realized it was a charade - men born in his generation and culture weren't supposed to be tender. So he was acting. He actually quite loved cats. I couldn't view him the same. I saw him more tenderly.

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1. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn13412-butterflies-remember-caterpillar-experiences/>

2. <https://commonhome.georgetown.edu/issues/spring-2022/a-flutter-of-memory/>

In each of these cases, the person didn't change. They are who they always have been. But how we experience them changes. That is transfiguration.

In our story today, the original text uses the word metamorphoo. Greek doesn't try to divide it into transfigured and transformed. But divinity scholars and English do. This is because our church mothers and fathers wanted to insist Jesus is divine before this point. This isn't Jesus transforming from human to more-than-human. He's still Jesus - wholly human, and wholly divine - before and during and after the mountaintop experience.

I think it is important to remember metamorphoo refers to both transfiguration and transformation.

Jesus clearly transforms - his face becomes radiant. He glows, like Moses glowed.

Jesus also clearly is transfigured. The disciples now encounter him as something MORE than a wise rabbi. He stands with the likes of Moses - a giver of good rules and laws - and Elijah - a prophet and faith reformer. What's more - the literal voice of God speaks to the terrified disciples and says "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased, listen to him!"

I don't know anyone who would view their friend the same after quite literally God speaks up to praise the friend.

Jesus is transfigured. And for a moment, transformed.

Trans means across, the other side, the other place. So we have transcontinental travel. Travel across to the other side of the continent. You're hearing a lot about transgender people right now. So people whose gender is across, the other. This is a very good day to talk about trans-people.

Imagine with me you wake up tomorrow with bad acne across your face. You know it doesn't belong there. Yet there it is. When you look in the mirror - your acne looks back. You cover up your acne with a mask and head swiftly to emerg. In the waiting room, you notice people keep staring at you. Can they see around your mask? Finally you see the doctor. She looks, nods, and says, "Well. There's no issue."

"But I don't acne! It doesn't belong there! Cure me!"

"But that's how you've been born. So try getting used to it."

And so you try. But every photograph - that acne. Mirrors - acne. You try creams and potions. You try prayers and faith healings. Still - the acne persists. And people see it. There's no hiding your face constantly.

Finally, your mental health is so poor, you return to the doctor. She diagnosis you with "body-dysmorphia." This is where the you in the mirror is not the you that you know you are. It's incredibly distressing! People who have amputations can develop it. People who go through chemotherapy and lose their hair often develop it. And it happens to kids who

begin to develop secondary sexual characteristics - like facial hair - when they know they're a girl. PCOS causes this in adult women and they can grow facial hair.

That's what being transgendered is like. Your body doesn't match who you know you are. The world sees male when you know you're female. The mirror says female when you know you're male. People try to "pass" as the gender they know they are. But this is stressful and anxiety producing too. Yet it's stressful to hide your true self too!

How do you "know"? It's a question that's hard to quantify. Sort of like... how do you know you're right-handed? You have a preference. You can try to use your non-dominant hand, but it isn't comfortable. And sort of like how you "know" your own sexuality. There are people you are attracted to, and although you can choose to act or not act on that attraction, you can't choose to feel or not feel it.

Transgender people usually know they are trans at age six.<sup>3</sup> Puberty is awful. Their bodies betray them and develop all kinds of signals that say the opposite of who they know they are. Puberty blockers, hormones, can be given to minors. These don't change their gender. These pause puberty.

Why?

It lets the child mature without the additional stress of their body continuing to betray them. It lets them receive counseling and address mental health. It gives them time to decide, as a mature adult, if they want to go through puberty and be the sex their body is born with, or if they want to go through puberty with hormone treatment and be in the body that matches an inner reality. As adults, their minds will be more mature to know themselves. As a minor, they can explore their gender by changing names or clothes and wait on puberty until they're certain who they are.

No doctor does sex reassignment on a minor<sup>4</sup>. No. It is dangerous and unethical. Doctors may delay puberty until the child is an adult; and doctors give counselling.

As an adult, a person may not have had access to puberty blockers. So they may have gender-affirming surgery. This is everything from Botox injections for plumper lips, or liposuction for moving fat around the body, or hair implants to treat baldness.... wait a minute, these are all things non-transgender people do!

Yes. Gender-affirming surgery is simply that - helping you look more like who you know you are. More womanly. More manly. More you.

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3. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8766261/> Zaliznyak M, Yuan N, Bresee C, et al. How Early in Life do Transgender Adults Begin to Experience Gender Dysphoria? Why This Matters for Patients, Providers, and for Our Healthcare System. *Sex Med* 2021;9:100448.

4. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/gender-affirming-care-youth-1.7021529> How gender-affirming health care for kids works in Canada: Transgender youth and their health-care providers say the field is widely misunderstood By Sheena Goodyear · CBC News · Posted: Nov 16, 2023

A few, very few, trans-people receive genitalia surgery. Of those who do, .01% regret it.<sup>5</sup> That is incredibly less than the regret level for knee replacement! 1 in 5 people, 22% of people, regret having knee surgery!<sup>6</sup> Of all surgeries, sex-reassignment has the lowest regret rate. You don't go under the knife for such unless all the other strategies to decrease body-dysmorphia have failed.

So - why today? Because of Tumbler Ridge. Yes, a trans-woman caused that hell. Does that mean all trans-people are mentally unstable and ready to be murderers? Absolutely not. There are, blessedly, few mass shootings in Canada. So we have to turn to the USA for statistics. But, hey, it is the USA who are exporting trans-hate.

As reported by the CBC, “James Densley, co-founder of The Violence Prevention Project, which tracks mass shootings in the U.S., says the claims that some are making about an epidemic of mass shootings by transgender people are not true and can be refuted by statistical evidence.”<sup>7</sup>

In the general population, 49% of people are male, 50% are female, and 1% are trans. So mass shootings should be about equally male or female caused, and only 1% of the time trans caused. But instead, “97.5 per cent of mass shootings in his database were carried out by men who are cisgender — those who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. Two per cent of those shootings were carried out by cisgender women and 0.5 per cent were carried out by people who are trans,” This means trans-people are less likely than the average person to do gun crimes. Men are much more likely than the average person to do gun crimes.

“Densley says the false perception that there are more mass shootings carried out by trans people can be attributed, in part, to what's known as "base rate neglect" — the idea that even a couple of incidents in a short window can make something feel like a pattern even when it's not.

"When a shooter is transgender, that fact becomes the story, especially on social media. Whereas when the shooter is male, their identity is never really mentioned because it's just unremarkable," he said.

"That creates an asymmetry in the coverage, where people will recall all the unusual cases because they were unusual.”

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5. Bustos VP, Bustos SS, Mascaro A, Del Corral G, Forte AJ, Ciudad P, Kim EA, Langstein HN, Manrique OJ. Regret after Gender-affirmation Surgery: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Prevalence. *Plast Reconstr Surg Glob Open*. 2021 Mar 19;9(3):e3477. doi: 10.1097/GOX.0000000000003477. Erratum in: *Plast Reconstr Surg Glob Open*. 2022 Apr 28;10(4):e4340. doi: 10.1097/GOX.0000000000004340. PMID: 33968550; PMCID: PMC8099405. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8099405/>

6. Mahdi A, Svantesson M, Wretenberg P, Hälleberg-Nyman M. Patients' experiences of discontentment one year after total knee arthroplasty- a qualitative study. *BMC Musculoskelet Disord*. 2020 Jan 14;21(1):29. doi: 10.1186/s12891-020-3041-y. PMID: 31937282; PMCID: PMC6961288. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6961288/>

7. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/tumbler-ridge-shooting-trans-community-false-claims-9.7085078> After Tumbler Ridge shooting, false claims about trans people have proliferated online Claims about an 'epidemic' of trans shooters circulating on social media are false, expert says. Kevin Maimann · CBC News · Posted: Feb 11, 2026 11:04

In Tumbler Ridge, being transgendered may have hurt the killer's mental health. It may have made her the victim of bullying. It may have made her depressed. But none of that justifies or condones the violence. None of it says murdering babes is okay.

Trans is an aspect of who she was.

Just like being right-handed.

Or blond.

Or two-legged.

Or Christian.

A person's identity is complicated.

Trans is not evil. Indeed, Jesus is trans. As we read today. Jesus reveals his true self. His identity is shared with his friends. Two of them are stunned speechless. Peter blabbers. Jesus asks them not to share that identity with others at this time. He isn't ready to come out of the closet. He isn't ready to face the world as Jesus-God's-Son. He will be ready, later, when the hour is right and the time is full.

This is a similar experience trans-people have today. If you're trusted with this knowledge of someone, they transfigure before you. You view them differently. And you might be speechless or you might babble. You may be asked to not share the news until the trans-person is ready to share.

And trans-people listening today, you don't owe it to the world to show yourself before you're ready, if you're ever ready. Jesus chooses only his 3 closest friends. Not all 12 in his posse. And he isn't ready for the world to know fully who he is until after his resurrection.

So how do we approach the Tumbler Ridge catastrophe? With open arms. Embrace everyone. Pray deeply. Mourn deeply. There is no reason for you or I to pick apart their lives. Our job is to love. Our job is to trust British Columbia has the resources and ability to address any legislation issues, security issues, health issues, or such. All of that will come with time.

Our job is not to vilify trans-women, whites, young adults, or any other category the perpetrator fits within. Just because one person does evil does not mean all people who share a similarity are evil. If that were the case, then you and I, and all humans, are evil.

And I believe at our core, we are good. God made us very good. And God made us for relationship. And God made us co-creators. People who create with God. So let us create a world of love, a world that mourns together right now, and a world that approaches people as first and foremost Beloved Children of God.

May it be so. And may God carry Tumbler Ridge, and every grieving family everywhere, with great tenderness. Amen

## **Scripture Readings – Feb. 15, 2026 – for LCUCPC**

### **Exodus 24:12-18 NRSV ue**

<sup>12</sup>The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there; I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” <sup>13</sup>So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up onto the mountain of God. <sup>14</sup>To the elders he had said, “Wait here for us, until we come back to you. Look, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them.”

<sup>15</sup>Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. <sup>16</sup>The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. <sup>17</sup>Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the Israelites. <sup>18</sup>Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

### **Exodus 31:18**

#### **The Two Tablets of the Covenant**

<sup>18</sup>When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.



### **Matthew 17: 1-9**

#### **The Transfiguration**

<sup>17</sup>Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. <sup>2</sup>And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light. <sup>3</sup>Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. <sup>4</sup>Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” <sup>5</sup>While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” <sup>6</sup>When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. <sup>7</sup>But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” <sup>8</sup>And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

<sup>9</sup>As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

May God’s spirit shape our understanding of these words.

**And may they awaken in our hearts**

