



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

2nd Sunday of Lent Year A

The Transfiguration of the Lord

Readings: *Genesis 12: 1-4, Ps 32, 2 Timothy 1: 8-10, Matthew 17: 1-9*

There are moments in the lives of most believers when they have stood on the mountain top. It may have been a particular day, it may have been a few seconds. It might have been at a simple mass in an almost empty church when the still small voice could be heard. It may have been in the thundering glory of a great cathedral festival when the swelling chorus of praise seemed truly to leap the boundaries of time and space and echo with the song of the angels and archangels in the eternal presence. It might have been in the sudden rush of joy in the company of delighted children or grandchildren. Or in the strange resurrection morning light at the bedside of a holy death when you first become aware that the relationship of love is, for the moment, radically altered and yet mysteriously unbroken. And there are simply moments when the immensity and beauty of creation testifies to its creator beyond doubt or peradventure and we suddenly know our place in it and our place in the world without end.

All our little local personal revelations are somehow remembered and caught up in the mystery that is before us here. The Transfiguration of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is a good place to remember the gifts that God has given us in these moments and give thanks.

The Transfiguration is one of the great moments of the Gospel in its glory and its revelatory power. It follows hard on the heels of Peter's confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi – 'You are the Christ the Son of the living God' and his immediate, if entirely reasonable, misunderstanding of what that would mean.

The inner circle, Peter, James and John are taken aside with Jesus into the mountaintop to catch no less than a glimpse of heaven and be given the key to understanding what is about to happen in Jerusalem. We are told simply that Jesus was transfigured. 'Metamorphosis' is the word. At its simplest it means a change of form, transformation. In its common biological use it refers to the process by which the final form is realised. The ordinary looking nymph of the dragonfly moults to reveal the shining splendour of the shimmering glory of its beauty in the summer light across reflecting waters.

Here then is Christ, the incarnate Son of God, on the mountaintop as His true glory is revealed. His garments are as the light itself, Matthew's Gospel tells us, like a flash of lightning, St. Luke confirms. The Divine Word enfleshed is robed in His primary creation, Light, the light in which all things will be revealed and in which there is no darkness or shadow of passing. The Shekinah, the glory is among us.

We see truly now who He is. As the old hymn puts it, 'God in man made manifest'.

Luke tells us that this occurred during prayer, during that intimate communion with the Father, human will utterly conforming to the divine in perfect love and unity – the vision of the end of all faithful souls.

In the midst of this metamorphosis further revelation occurs.

The Law and the Prophets appear represented by Moses and Elijah.

They are not simply the representatives of their categories, of course, though that is important. But they are the servants of God whose journeys into the mountains have been blessed with the divine encounter.

They have witness the storms and the trumpet blast, the howling winds of the peak and the utter loneliness of the absolutely committed and they have received the Word and heard the still small voice. They have been in Communion with the Alpha and the Omega of all things. They know the journey and the cost.

Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of all this, Law and Prophets, Covenant and Communion. For He is the Word that both have heard and borne in their time and which their faithful successors have longed for and tried to keep. Here they bear witness to the One who is the end of all the unfolding of salvation history of which they were and are so great a part.

Luke adds a detail which is often overlooked. He tells us that They spoke of Jesus' 'departure' which 'He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem'.

We know with hindsight that they refer to His sacrificial death on the Cross. But pause for a moment and look at the word St. Luke records for 'departure'. It is 'EXODUS'.

The Passion of Christ is indeed to be the new and final Passover, setting His people free, by the blood of the lamb, from the Angel of Death, and leading them on the final journey to the promised land of the unending kingdom of

the Divine Presence, the 'I AM', the eternal 'now' of absolute reality, the realms of light.

And then more...

The cloud descends, the sign of the Spirit in the first Exodus and the voice of the Father speaks acknowledging His Son. The disciples are surrounded by the cloud and hear the proclamation and the injunction, 'Hear Him'.

When the Word speaks the Word it is none other but the Word of God. You cannot put a cigarette paper between the Father's self revelation and the teaching of the Son.

We are, through the Gospels, the living and eternal word of God, able to be miraculously present at this profound self disclosure of the Most Holy Trinity. As the Catechism tells us, 'On the threshold of the public life; the Baptism. On the threshold of the Passover; the Transfiguration

Jesus' baptism proclaimed 'the mystery of the first regeneration', namely our baptism. The Transfiguration 'is the sacrament of the second regeneration'; namely our own resurrection.' (Aquinas ST III 45 4&2)

If we could but glimpse a moment of that truth we would, like the disciples be both afraid beyond words and yet want to stay there forever. And, unsurprisingly, while the mystic John and the martyr leader James are not recorded as speaking, our own beloved Peter expresses the wish that is close to all our hearts in moments of transcendence. 'It is good Lord for us to be here'. Amen. Hallelujah.

But can't we make that moment last for longer. Can we build tents for you and Moses and Elijah? We have seen a glimpse of heaven and we do not want to return to the grubby difficult everyday ordinariness of the valley. We do not want to come down to the place where will forget what has happened, resume our stupidities and disobediences, fail to follow your Word for all our knowing and promising, not notice the signs, listen but not really hear.

At moments like that we want Heaven and we want it now. We know in those rare interludes that we are indeed sojourners in a strange land looking for home. We do not want to follow the Exodus to Jerusalem through the Calvary but it is the only way for it is the way of Christ. We may no longer fear death but we still fear dying. The Transfiguration has shown us the future. The metamorphosis will be ours one day for, as St. Paul tells us, He will change our lowly body to be like His glorious body' (Phil.3v21).

When we hit the Via Dolorosa and stumble under the weight of the Cross, we should remember the Mountain of Transfiguration and be reassured that this is indeed the road to eternity, the exodus walked by all the saints of God. Like them we have seen the future and it is glorious.