



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

2nd Sunday of Advent - Year A

Changed from glory into glory

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

My father, who was not a man noted for his understatement on anything, would sometimes stand in front of the mirror and, in a provocative aside to my mother remark; 'My goodness me, Esme Low, you are a very lucky woman'. My mother, I need hardly add, responded if at all with a mild snort of derision.

This little marital set-piece, often as not performed in company (my father was not a shy man), came to my mind the other day as I was wearily peering in the bathroom mirror, making my usual poor job of shaving, and realising how much more I looked like my father than ever and how eloquent and accurate was my poor mother's dismissive response of his insufferable vanity.

The reason for my reflection, in both senses, was that I was giving early thought to this Sunday's Gospel reading, the Transfiguration of Christ on the mountain. I was riffing on the old hymn,

'Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be

Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee

*Changed from glory into glory til in Heaven we take our place
Til we cast our crowns before thee lost in wonder love and praise'.*

What will this new creation be like? How will this shabby old heap of tottering mortality be changed from glory into glory? For a start I would like to come back as 35 rather than 67. Not perfect, I grant you, but it would definitely afford a better chance of restoration.

Here, two weeks into the long haul of Lent, the Church gives us this amazing piece of Scripture. We are invited, with the inner core group of the disciples, Peter, James and John, into the holy mountain for, what is to be until after the Resurrection, a private revelation. The Gospel tells us simply that Jesus was transfigured. The Greek word, now used to describe biological transformations, is 'metamorphosis' – a change of form. Just as the dragonfly moults its penultimate nymph stage, the crinkly unattractive gubbins, before the reality is released in all its glorious blue/green shimmering glory to glide across the summer pond so is the transformation of Man to be realised in Christ.

The Disciples do not know it but they are, with Jesus, on the road to Calvary. In St. Luke's account the prophet Elijah is discussing with Jesus that very journey and he refers to it as a new Exodus. The Way of the Cross is, in other words, to be the long road to freedom for the soul of fallen Man. It is not just the road to the Promised Land now but the ascent to the Holy City, the Heavenly Jerusalem.

In the midst of this revelation is the dazzling light of the Godhead. Jesus' face, we are told, shone like the sun and even His clothes were irradiated. In ikons of this epiphany, the writer paints no shadow on the figures. All

are bathed in this transcendent illumination. There is no doubt who Jesus is.

Should anyone hesitate to acknowledge this divine reality, we are afforded the presence of the two great witnesses from the Old Covenant. Elijah, the foremost prophet of God, whose name means 'God alone is God', the man taken into Heaven without dying, bears witness. The Proclaimer of the Word of God points to the Word of God incarnate, Jesus.

Moses, the lawgiver, the liberator, the leader of God's people points to the fulfilment of the Law, the liberator of Man from his sins and the leader into the promised land of Paradise, Jesus.

The Transfiguration is both a foretelling of the future and a foretaste of Heaven. It is the proclamation of the Divinity of Jesus Christ and a glorious insight into how the Son of God will transform the lowly estate of the sons of Man.

In the Transfiguration, the metamorphosis of man, we are given not an explanation but an insight into the destiny of those in Christ. Like the privileged disciples there may be many times when we forget this astounding truth. But, on the pilgrim road, in the mission field, on the Via Dolorosa and at the Calvary, in the face of His dying and ours, we need to return to this mountaintop of the Transfiguration and remember who Jesus is and what He will do for us at the end. That metamorphosis is a process that begins now, here in our daily lives. So when we look in the bathroom mirror we are not too depressed by the outward declension of our mortality but looking forward to the dragonfly of the soul.

We have seen the future.....and it is in the company of the saints in the dazzling light of the Presence of the Risen Lord.

Be, then, of good cheer and journey onward toward the Holy City.

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