



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year C-August 7th 2022

***Readings: Wisdom 18: 6-9, Psalm 32, Hebrews 11: 1-2. 8-19,
Luke 12: 32-48***

Vary rarely in my ministry have I ignored the lection of the day and preached on another text but I take the liberty of doing so today because otherwise a great feast is submerged by the weight of 'ordinary time'. I refer, of course, to the Transfiguration.

There are two key moments in the Gospel according to St Luke when all the pieces come together and the glorious panorama of salvation history is laid out before our astonished eyes in all its majesty and blazing glory. One is here on the mountain top in a light more brilliant than the sun. The other is on the little dusty road from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus in the wake of the Crucifixion.

The first is intensely visual. The second intimate and aural.

Today, the disciples, the inner core, Peter and James and John, are invited to accompany Jesus into the mountains. What happens next is an echo of the story of Exodus Ch.24 when we are told that God invites Moses and the inner circle into the mountains and there, contrary to all previous experience, they saw God in all His glory and ate and drank unharmed – a foretaste of the Holy Communion of the Mass. But here the inner three are privy to something in addition. Not only do they

witness Christ transfigured, the light of the glory of God radiating from Him, but they are given what will eventually become understanding. For accompanying Christ in this vision of the heavenly glory of God are two hugely significant figures, Moses and Elijah. Moses, of course, represents the great founding story of Israel, the Exodus, the liberation of the slaves to become the People of God and to fulfil the covenant of God with Abraham in his descendants. The Chosen People and The Promised Land.

Also Moses represents the giving of the Law, the precious gift that will define Israel throughout her long and turbulent history. On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus is revealed as the summation and origin of the Law and the new and final Exodus.

In the person of Elijah, my personal Old Testament hero, we see the long line of the prophets, the bearers of the Word of God, the proclaimers, in good times and in bad, of the Second Person of the Trinity by whom all things came to be, now incarnate in Jesus, Son of Mary, the supreme bearer of the Word.

On the mountain the three chosen disciples come to see what they will only later understand to be the whole of salvation history leading to Jesus and summed up in His life, death and resurrection.

They reflect on this because they hear the conversation of the other two with Jesus and, as St Luke records, they speak of His going to Jerusalem as the EXODUS. In other words the great saving event of Israel's history is about to be not just repeated on Calvary but rather superseded, finalised and made universal by the Sacrifice of the Lamb 'slain from the foundation of the world'. This is the Exodus, the way out, the way home, the way to becoming the People of God with an eternal destiny, the escape from sin and death for all the world who will offer the Lamb and set out in faith.

In the years to come the chosen three will reflect on this remarkable moment, this overwhelming insight into the true divine nature of Jesus hidden in His humanity and gloriously exposed as the dazzling light of Heaven bursts forth from Him. (This memory is referred to in 2 Peter Ch 1 v 16f.)

This eternal continuity is given to them (and us) so that we do not think of Jesus as a momentary aberration or disruption in salvation history but rather its cause and its fulfilment. All that has gone before flows from Him and leads back to Him. All that comes after emanates from the Eternal Word's encounter with humanity and the recapitulation of Man in his intended perfection and companionship with God.

The second story in Luke is that of the Emmaus Road. Most of us will recall the climax of this account with the amazingly knowledgeable stranger being revealed as the Risen Lord in the breaking of the Bread. What we often overlook is the content of the two hour conversation that preceded this revelatory moment. Christ the stranger on the road encounters the dejected disciples and asks them to tell the story. This they do, pausing to share their grief at the apparent failure of Jesus by dying on the Cross and the consequent end of all their hopes and dreams. The feisty stranger is having none of it. Upbraiding them for their foolishness, He goes on to explain, over the next two or three hours, how this is all entirely commensurate with and the fulfilment of the Holy Scriptures- that is to say what we now call the Old Testament. From this astonishing encounter the Church gains her self-understanding as the People of God, the chosen, the called, the ecclesia, the Church. Jesus is not a random rabbi, an upstart, a blip on the religious landscape but the very summit and source of salvation history. From the blinding light of Mt Tabor to the dusty track to Emmaus, we are invited to see the whole extraordinary, gracious and loving roadmap of salvation, the

cartography of the Christian Way, the millennia deep continuity of our Faith and, like the disciples on the road and the disciples on the heights, be at once terrified and exalted, fascinated and fired up, returning to Jerusalem to share our story and thence take it to the waiting world.