



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

The Transfiguration of the Lord - Year A

Mystery of Light

Readings: Daniel 7: 9-10, 13-14, Ps 96, 2 Peter 1:16-19, Matthew 17:1-9

The Mysteries of Light, which St John Paul II added to the Rosary, may find their apogee in the Mass but they find their explanation and their destiny in the Mystery of the Transfiguration. Here on the mountaintop of Tabor we find ourselves in exclusive company, the inner circle of the 'soon to be Apostles'. They are treated to a revelation that is at the heart of the Christian Gospel. They see the culmination of Salvation History as the prophets, the Word Bearers, represented by Elijah, make joint witness with the Lawman and Liberator, Moses to the Messiahship of Jesus who is the origin and the fulfilment of both. The apostles then hear the conversation which refers to the coming events in Jerusalem, the Passion of Christ described as the new and final Exodus, the ultimate liberation of Man.

All of this is bathed in the radiance of the Light of Christ, a light so bright that they cannot bear it. The disciples are granted a mercifully brief vision of the future, of Heaven and, understandably, they want to 'tabernacle it here'.

The Mystery of the Transfiguration is shot through with this pure vision of Light. Jesus is the Light of the World, so He claimed. Now they (and we) see that this is not romantic imagery or 'guru grandstanding'. He is not just the

Light of the world – lux mundi - but the light of all that is or was or ever will be.

LIGHT –What is it? We have moved so far in human history in our understanding of this foundational element of our existence, this first stated truth of God. From the early classical theory that light came from the human eye or from the object observed right through to quantum physics. Therein, now we take a privileged peek into infinity as we learn of light as energy, power, communication, incalculable speed and penetration, as revelation of all that physically is and the forensic knowledge it both contains and gives. It is no accident that God's first command in creating out of nothing through His Word, later made flesh in Christ, is 'FIAT LUX' - Let there be light. A mere myth or fairy story would have left such intangibles 'til last. The Book of the Genesis, though not natural science, knows better, combining both spiritual and physical science holistically into 'scire' – what we know. One of the tragedies of the so-called 'Enlightenment' is that, in its excited pursuit of the forensics of matter, it decoupled the enquiry of physics from its previously underpinning spiritual quest – a disaster that Newton and Bacon would have seen as madness.

This Light, the first act of the Word, from which all light draws its own radiance, is foundational because it is divine. It throbs in the hearts of all who love Him. It pulses in the brain of all who seek Him. It illuminates the reason of all who search for the eternal truth. It shines through the mortal poverty and rags of the righteousness of the servant soul, the becoming saint.

The road to sainthood, we recall, passes not through the gnostic gobbledegook of secret societies or vainly imagined human hierarchies but through the Calvary by way of Tabor, the Mount of the Transfiguration. In the one lies the understanding of the other. Without the Transfiguration the goal

of Apotheosis, the divinisation of Man, the highest doctrine of the human purpose and destiny, is easily rebutted as but an extraordinarily ambitious fairy story and evidence of man's infinite capacity for self-delusion. But they, and through them, we have been invited to see what no man has a right to see, the vision of the future of Man, ransomed, reconciled, restored. The disciples only make sense of this extraordinary gift of God's grace later in the light of the Empty Tomb, the Emmaus Road, the Galilee shoreline, the Upper Room.

This is the key to the Gospel of Eternal Life which we preach.

Thus when we pray for the soul in the Purgatory we say:

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Grant eternal rest to him, Lord and let perpetual light shine on him.

What is this rest but a homecoming? What is this light but the fire of God's love transfiguring and transforming our sin crusted souls into the gold of eternity. Here is that light by which we shall finally know ourselves as God knows us. The 'riddle' we see every time we peer into the 'looking glass' will be solved.

'Now', St Paul says, 'I see through a glass darkly – then I shall see face to face.'

Nor will that light be the source of any shadow for it will reveal us all, not in two dimensional summary but in five dimensional reality.

And how do we envision the saints, the real Illuminati? – at once 'sleeping under the altar', awaiting the final trump, - like faithful dogs, asleep in the Great Hall before a winter fire, one ear half-cocked for the Master's footstep, the softly slidden bolt and the wild dawn romp in the Elysian fields?

Or 'at rest', 'still', 'at peace'. All of this and yet, at once like stars orbiting around the Son who is the Sun around whom the very cosmos that He made whirls into infinity, alive with His eternal power and grace.

They are as stars - at once in stasis - yet ever oscillating with the divine energy which illuminates their aura, that halo of light from the Light of lights.

They bear that sign of apotheosis, that reflection of the godhead, that assumption into the divinity. Constantly and compassionately they respond to our prayers, intervening in the world of men, bringing the clarity of eternity into the frantic rush of linear time, reminding attentive mortals of our eternal destiny, lighting and enlightening our path, cheering us on our way.

Every time we light a candle and invoke their prayers, we dispel the dark and proclaim the future. It is Transfiguration.

Saint Moses.... Saint Elijah.... Saints Peter, James and John.... Pray for us.