

## Transfiguration

2314

Almighty Father,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross;  
give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory.

Our today text may be found in the Second Epistle of St Peter, chapter 1, verse 18:

‘ . . . we were with him on the holy mountain.’

The feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord, Jesus Christ, is celebrated according to our Christian calendar on 6<sup>th</sup> August. So why, I ask myself, do we have this second chance on the Sunday next before Lent, a moveable feast, to remember this significant moment in the life of Christ? A simple answer is all to do with the rhythm of our Christian Year, how one event can have a place in the pattern of the whole which help us make sense of the overall picture.

As Peter recalls in our text today, the event took place on a holy mountain. Mountains are traditionally a meeting point with God. On a mountainside, it is possible to have a tangible sense of otherness: high up, overlooking the valley below, the air feels different, the world looks different and we can feel something of the awe and the majesty of being close to God. Moses met God on Mount

Sinai; Elijah met God on Mount Horeb. Here on Mount Tabor or more likely on Mount Hermon, this God encounter – the Transfiguration of our Lord – takes place.

Who is there ? Jesus and just three of the twelve: Peter, James and John. Then, there is Moses and Elijah. And, of course, there is the presence of God in the cloud, the Shekinah, and the voice of God heard coming from the cloud.

Why are they there ? To pray; to discern, to confirm the will of God; to be energised for the way ahead, the road to Jerusalem and for what awaits the Son of God in the City of God .

What happens there ? Jesus is transfigured. He is radiant with light. His face shines with the light of God; his clothes are whiter than white, whiter than any fuller on earth could ever hope to produce. Moses and Elijah speak to Jesus about what is to come. The Shekinah manifests itself and from the cloud comes the voice of God declaring in words reminiscent of Jesus' baptism that **'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him !'** And then Peter, James and John fall down on the ground overcome with fear !

So why are we marking now today an event that is traditionally remembered at the beginning of August ? Because this week, on Ash Wednesday, we begin the forty days of Lent preparing ourselves once again to mark Holy Week which culminates in the passion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. What the Transfiguration does is to parallel Good Friday and underpin the light of the Easter dawn.

The one takes place on a mountainside; the other on a hillside. In one just Peter James and John witness what happens; in the other just some of the women and John stand at the foot of the cross. In one, Jesus shines with the light of God; in the other, the world is darkened as Jesus, the light of God, is temporarily extinguished. In one, his clothes are whiter than white; in the other, stripped of his clothes, his body shines with sweat and blood. In one, Moses and Elijah are present to encourage and confirm the will of God; in the other, the promise of the Old Testament, the Law and the prophets, the word of God, is fulfilled. In one, God's voice declares Jesus to be his Son the beloved; in the other, the centurion declares that Jesus to be the Son of God. Both embody the love of God for Man, a vision of how much we are loved by him as God reaches out to touch us.

And so let's not be surprised that each year immediately before Lent we mark a second time in the calendar the Transfiguration of the Lord. It is an event that tells us precisely who and what Jesus is and on the cross, he will confirm what we already know: that he is our Lord and Saviour, the Son of God incarnate who loves us so much he is ready and willing to die for us so that we might have life through him.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist  
St Bartholomew's, Dinard  
2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2014*

G: Sermons 29 : Transfiguration

