

The Second Sunday in Lent – 8th March 2020

St. Matthew 17 v 1-9.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

It is clear from the Gospels that Peter's Confession of Faith in Jesus (which took place at Caesarea Philippi) marks a significant turning point in the Ministry of Jesus. Now that Peter and the disciples have affirmed their faith in Jesus – that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God – Jesus (for the first time) begins to teach the disciples that He is to suffer and to die. Famously, Peter protests against this and Jesus rebukes Peter, " Get behind me Satan!". It is clear that Peter expects something different from the Messiah – not suffering and death but triumph and victory.

The Jewish people were waiting for a Deliverer. Someone to overthrow the Romans and re-establish an independent (and victorious) Israel. But Jesus was going to overthrow – death! And so, from Peter's Confession of Faith at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus begins to challenge their conception and understanding of the Messiah. He is to be a Sacrifice. He is to be rejected. And the cost of discipleship – of communion with Jesus – is that we also must expect opposition and rejection.

And so (on the Mount of the Transfiguration) Jesus strengthens the faith of the disciples. He reveals His Glory to them. Jesus knows that there are difficult times ahead and so He not only forewarns the disciples but He seeks to strengthen them, to encourage them, to embolden them, for the trials which lie ahead.

The same is true of us. We too may have many trials ahead of us. Many difficulties. How important therefore that we should anchor ourselves in Jesus. Storms may come – are we anchored in Jesus? Have we been to Confession? Are we investing in a deeper prayer life? Are we investing *time* in a deeper prayer life? Are the great issues of life and death vivid to us? Are we seeking a closer walk with God? " O for a closer walk with God! A calm and heavenly frame. A light to shine upon the road, That leads me to the Lamb. Where is the blessedness I knew, When first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul-refreshing view, Of Jesus and His Word? Return, O Holy Dove, return! Sweet Messenger of rest. I hate the sins – I hate the sins – that made Thee mourn, And drove Thee from my breast"

Lent is a season of renewal, a time of repentance, an invitation to turn around, to put everything right between us and God. We live in sombre and sobering times. How providential that these times (and trials) are falling upon us in this Season of Lent. Let us pray for repentance. Let us pray for renewal. And support our prayers with fasting and abstinence and self-denial, with gifts of generosity and almsgiving, so that if trials and suffering and death should come, we may pass through to the Resurrection, and to the glorious transfiguration of our fallen nature, revealed to us today on the Mount of the Transfiguration and hear those words of Jesus " Stand up! Do not be afraid!" " And when they raised their eyes – they saw no one – but Jesus only." Dimond Iesu! What a vision! – to see through all the ups and downs of life, through all the trials and joys of life, through all the sudden changes and violent disturbances of life – to see only Jesus, coming to us *through* the storms and across the raging sea – "Stand up! Do not be afraid!"

May God grant to us- in this Season of Lent- the grace of a deep repentance and the grace of a new consecration, from the heart, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to Whom be glory now and forever. Amen.