

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson
6th August 2023 - The Transfiguration of the Lord

Readings (Year A): 1st: Daniel 7:9-10,13-14. 2nd: 2 Peter 1:16-19. **Gospel:** Matthew 17:1-9.

'You were transfigured on the mountain, and your disciples, as much as they were capable of it, beheld your glory, O Christ our God, so that when they should see you crucified they would understand that your passion was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that you truly are the splendour of the Father.'

That extract from the Byzantine liturgy beautifully expresses the wonder of the Transfiguration. The transfiguration experience was both fulfilment and foretaste.

On the Mount, which was ablaze with God's glory, Moses and Elijah spoke with the transfigured Christ. They stood alongside the **Son of Man** soon to be revealed as the **Man of Sorrows**.

Moses was in search of God, and, at prayer on Mount Horeb he had begged to see the glory of God. He was told that no one could see God and live. He was not to see God but only to catch a glimpse of the glory as God passed by. Moses' experience is one that we share.

We may long to see God and cannot do so directly. Nonetheless we search for Him and at times we too catch a glimpse of glory reflected in what is true, good and beautiful.

The 2nd reading tells us quite clearly that the gospel the apostles were preaching was nothing like invented myths or false tales, but eyewitness accounts of seeing 'his majesty for ourselves.'

'We heard, we saw,' St Peter says. Her late majesty Queen Elizabeth often said she needed to be seen to be believed. The New Testament throughout tells us; 'we saw and we believed.'

In this church (Pz) we see all this so clearly in our Rosary windows. Just look at the 4 central panels: **The Infant Christ: The Transfigured Christ, The Crucified Christ and The Risen Christ**.

Like Elijah, when he hears the still small voice, we can often best experience God not in extra-ordinary and shattering events but when we are silent and still. We shall hear that in next weekend's 1st reading.

Peter, James and John fell to their knees, marvelling at the sight of Moses and Elijah and their transfigured Lord. They saw the glory of the divine shining forth in the human. Then as the brightness faded, they saw only Jesus.

The disciples did not understand why the towering figure of the Son of Man foretold in our 1st reading should be killed, and still less how he could rise again. Even after the resurrection, many found it difficult to grasp the meaning and purpose of the death of Christ.

The Mount of Transfiguration and Calvary are linked in the Gospel and are linked also in life. The magnificence of the Son of God transfigured is to be found veiled in Gethsemane and on Calvary.

The glory of God, not now seen directly by human eyes, is just as real and present when Christ experiences the agony in the garden. In this agony of the Son of Man all humanity was involved.

The passion of Jesus Christ is for all time and for all people. Of human suffering there seems no end. The passion and death of Christ is everywhere echoed and continued. The Mount and Calvary, in their different ways, reveal the true face of Christ, who is the Son of Man and the Man of Sorrows.

But there was to be, as we all know, a further revelation when the crucified became the **risen Lord**. It was then that suffering humanity was shown its ultimate destiny and meaning. Death and suffering were swallowed up in victory.

Life everlasting and love without end became the themes of the Good News which is **the only hope for humanity**. We who still live in the valley of the shadow of death and darkness should lift our eyes to where the day has already dawned, and where Christ, the Son of Man, is seated at the right hand of the Father in eternal glory.