

## SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

*Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9*

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white.

Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

### REFLECTION 1: TRANSFIGURATION / TRANSFORMATION

Cosmetic surgeons promise transfiguration. If you don't like your physical features, they can redesign your appearance. Even barbers and beauticians have had a hand in the process of transfiguring their clients with a new hairdo, a different cut, a dye job – turning the ordinary and plain into the stunning and attractive.

For instance the film, *My Fair Lady*, brought to audiences worldwide the tale of Eliza Doolittle, a poor flower seller on the streets of London. Having overheard Henry Higgins, a professor of phonetics, boasting that he could teach anyone to speak properly, Doolittle found her way to his home. After hours and hours of rigorous tutoring, Doolittle emerged transfigured in appearance, poise, speech, accent and wardrobe. Looking every bit the duchess, she accompanied Higgins to the races – where in a moment of excitement, she lapsed back into Cockney, proving that her transformation to that point had only been skin deep.

Today's feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17: 1-9) invites us to look beyond mere skin-deep changes, regardless of how dramatic they may seem. Today, the transfigured Jesus calls forth in his own a change that evolves from within – a transfiguration of mind, heart and spirit. By the grace of God, the process of transfiguration begins and continues until we become clearer reflections of Jesus in our world. The closer we come to Jesus, the more we profess to love him, the more change becomes a way of life.

Each day of Lent as we walk in the footsteps of Jesus, we are to become less selfish and more acutely concerned with others and their needs. Each day we meet Jesus at prayer in the Word, in the sacraments, in our Rosary, the experience of that encounter compels us to work more avidly for justice and peace. Each time I recognise the face of Jesus in the least ones of the world, that face calls me to be loving, kind, patient, and compassionate. On the other hand, each time we allow an injustice to go unchallenged or a need unanswered, the process of transfiguration is halted. Transfiguration/transformation begins from within.

Today's Gospel describes the transfiguration of Jesus as the disciples witnessed the blinding light, the prophetic vision, the voice speaking from the cloud. If the disciples had any question about this Jesus they were following, the Transfiguration was the astounding answer.

## REFLECTION 2:

## IT IS GOOD THAT WE ARE HERE

### MY OWN TABOR

Picture a flat-topped mountain, just about the same height as the Sugar Loaf on the gateway to East Wicklow. Mount Tabor in Galilee, where the events described in today's Gospel are traditionally said to have taken place, is somewhat similar, except that the mountain in the Holy Land is luxuriant in growth and can be reached by coach through a roadway with a few corkscrew bends. There is a beautifully constructed church at the summit, the work of the Italian architect, Berlutzii. It is cared for by the Franciscan Fathers.

Jesus and three of his chosen disciples, Peter, James and John, had gone there, ostensibly to get a break from their busy ministry. While Jesus was there his face began to shine like the sun and his garments became startlingly white. Then Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Finally, the mountain was blanketed with a bright cloud and a voice came from the cloud declaring that Jesus is God's beloved Son in whom the Father finds favour and that we should listen to him.

There was something awesome about the appearance of Moses and Elijah, these figures from the Old Testament seemed to have simply passed from this earth - Elijah the great prophet and Moses the great Lawgiver, seemed too great to have died. Now they were in conversation with Jesus. The Evangelist Luke alone tells us about the content of their encounter. It was about Jesus' 'exodus' which was to take place in Jerusalem. In other words, his passion, death and resurrection. These two great men of old were being consulted/briefed about Jesus' imminent work of salvation as Messiah and Redeemer - his own 'exodus' on the Hill of Golgotha.

In a way, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is our own Tabor. There we are gathered to listen to the life-giving words, and be nourished from the table of the Eucharist. Here surely the Father is well pleased. But for each of us, like Jesus, we have our own personal 'exodus', our own Jerusalem, our own Calvary - our departure from this life. May each Mass be for us a Tabor, strengthening us for our final 'exodus' when, like the three apostles, we will hopefully look up and see no one, only Jesus.