

## Lent 2 A

**RE Teacher:** Now children I've just described the pleasures of heaven, hands up all who want to go there. All the children put up their hand except for Debbie. **Re Teacher:** Why don't you want to go to heaven, Debbie? **Debbie:** I'd like to go Miss, but me Mum said I had to come straight home after School. Brendan Behan, a colourful Irish author of the 60<sup>th</sup> said that priests are always talking the joys of Heaven, but scarcely any of them want to go there, at least immediately. Could be right

Heaven may seem a long way off but we're often given glimpses of it along the road of life. For the three apostles the Transfiguration was one such glimpse, meant to boost their flagging faith which will soon be tested when Jesus is arrested. Apart from St John, all the other apostles including Peter and James failed the test.

But like the apostles, Moses and Elijah too had moments when their morale hit rock bottom. Both of these Old Testament worthies suffered greatly for Israel and in that sense they prefigure Christ in His sufferings. While in the Sinai desert, for instance, the people of Israel gave Moses a very hard time and blamed him for everything that went wrong and, centuries later, Queen Jezebel made the life of Elijah a complete misery because he was instrumental in bringing down the worship of the false God Baal which Jezebel herself had set up. Elijah was so dejected, he at times even wished he were dead.

Like Moses and Elijah in the transfiguration scene, we stand shoulder to shoulder with Christ if, instead of abandoning ship when the going gets tough, we continue to stand by Him. Before His passion Jesus kept reminding the apostles of how he was soon to die shamefully on a Cross. Such talk would have unsettled them.

But a voice which came from heaven is meant to reassure them - "this is my Son, the beloved, listen to Him". But they only listened to half the story. Jesus foretells not just his Passion but also His Resurrection of which the Transfiguration is a sort of preview.

Jesus standing alongside Moses and Elijah also signifies that He is the fulfilment of all the OT promises, one of which is taking possession of the Promised Land. Our promised land, of course, is heaven which lasts forever. One of the prefaces of Lent puts it succinctly: *"we may so deal with the things of this passing world so as to hold fast to the things which eternally endure."*

Peter, with his head in the clouds, wanted the transfiguration to go on forever and not come down from the mountain but he'll shortly be 'brought down to earth with a bang'. Very soon he'll be with Jesus again in the garden of Gethsemane but unlike on Mount Tabor, he'll be far from saying: "It's wonderful for us to be here". On the contrary, when questioned by the servant girl about being a friend of Jesus, he'll blatantly deny he ever knew Him.

But Peter will soon find out that Tabor and Calvary are inextricably linked. If it was necessary for Christ to suffer before he entered into his glory, it'll be necessary for us as well. But transfiguration awaits those who carry their crosses in union with Him.