

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.

Heaven may seem a long way off but we're often given glimpses of it along the road of life. The Transfiguration was on such a glimpse, meant to boost the flagging faith of the apostles, soon to be tested when Jesus was taken. All the apostles, apart from John, seemed to have failed the test. They fled the scene.

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 an dreadful 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 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 renew our faith in 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 and we should keep our eyes on it. One of the prefaces of Lent puts it succinctly: *"having been freed from disordered affections, we may so deal with the things of this passing world in order 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 won't be saying: "It's wonderful for us to be there". 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 which follows will mean that the crown replaces the cross. The world of the past will have gone.