

Lent 2 (ABC)

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. Well, in the Transfiguration, the apostles Peter, James and John were afforded a preview of their true homeland while still on their way there.*

The Transfiguration was meant to bolster the flagging faith of the apostles, soon to be tested when Jesus is arrested. All the apostles, apart from John, failed the test. They fled the scene.

Like these 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 Passion. While in the Sinai desert, for instance, the people of Israel gave Moses a horrible 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 angered the evil queen.

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 and even shaken their faith in Him.

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. It's a human trait that in general we seem to get more mileage from bad news than from good.

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. That's our destination as well, but our promised land is heaven. 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 as to hold rather 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'. Soon he'll be with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane and then the High Priest's courtyard 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, he'll deny he ever knew Him.

But Peter will soon find out that Tabor and Calvary are inextricably linked. Glory awaits those who have faithfully carried their everyday crosses in union with Jesus. "It was indeed necessary for the Christ to suffer before He entered into his glory". It will be necessary for us as well. There is no Crown without the Cross.