

The Transfiguration

Two frogs accidentally fell into a bucket of cream. They swam and swam but every effort they made to climb up the side of the bucket was in vain. One of the frogs just simply gave up and drowned. The other frog was no quitter. He gave it his best shot, as he splashed and thrashed around in the cream. Imagine his surprise and relief when, as a result of the struggle, he found himself sitting on top of a huge lump of butter from which he leapt out of the bucket to freedom.

The only real sin is that which deadens our belief in ourselves and in God. Two of the most tragic figures in the Bible are King Saul in the Old Testament and Judas in the New Testament. Both were specially called by God but regrettably ended their own lives, bereft of hope. Written over Dante's hell are the words: 'abandon hope all who enter here.'

The transfiguration of Jesus should raise our confidence level and not let us forget the glorious future to which we are all called. His victory over sin and death is also ours but we often give up too easily and, as they say, leave before the miracle.

Before Jesus was transfigured the apostles were on a bit of a 'downer'. Jesus had just told them of his approaching passion, death and resurrection. They, however, cast doubt on the resurrection and chose to dwell on the gloomier side of things.

So, in the transfiguration Jesus afforded them a preview of Himself in glory in order to boost their flagging faith and prepare them for the ordeal of His approaching passion. For Jesus the Cross would lead to glory, something the apostles found very hard to take on board. Sometimes we do as well.

At weddings I always encourage the couple to rely on the grace of God when things go a bit pear-shaped for them. If they leave God out of the picture they might get too entangled in the

mundane things of life and miss the bigger picture. Mole hills can turn into mountains – small disagreements can be blown out of all proportion. But having faith in a loving God will mean that their marriage will not be blown off course too easily. Taken in the right spirit, a setback can lead to a deeper self-knowledge and a healing of hearts. It can be a moment when we confront the truth about ourselves which in turn initiates change and inner conversion. I like that verse from the psalm which says 'as they go through the bitter valley they make it a place of springs'.

Real believers are transfiguration people who can turn situations around and often use them to good advantage. Scripture says: 'we know that by turning everything to their good, God co-operates with all those who love Him'. And when it says 'everything' it means even the things which rob us of our self-belief and inner worth.

Scripture tells us that 'the sufferings of this life are not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us'. That alone should imbue us with fresh hope.