

Homily. Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. Year. A. 5/6 August 2023.

It's very easy to get caught up in the glory of the transfiguration event. All of that bright light and the shining cloud and the voice of God confirming Jesus true identity on the mountain top. I know that I got caught up into focusing on these things and I'm not alone. The disciples, Peter, James and John were entranced by what they saw in the brilliance shining out of Jesus and by hearing God's voice speaking approvingly of him as beloved Son. In fact, so caught up in this experience were they that they wanted to stay put on the mountain, with Peter proposing to build tents for Jesus God's Son, Moses the law giver and Elijah the model prophet.

It's only with hindsight that we come see through the shining light to the hot fire burning behind it. It's only after spending time in reflection that we get to pierce through the bright cloud and hear to the new commandment God gave from within it; that we listen to God's Son and follow his way. The burning fire giving light was that of intense love and devoted fidelity to what God willed. The new commandment from within the Divine cloud was that the wonder of the mountain top had to be left behind, descended from, back to the dust and work of ordinary life and ordinary people with their problems, hopes, fears and dreams.

All of this was inevitably going to lead to a conflict between Jesus and evil, ending up in his painful self-giving sacrifice of the Cross. The truth is that the special transfiguration experience was all about lovingly living for others every day and the price of doing so. These were the realities that Moses and Elijah were talking over with Jesus.

Strengthened by what they'd seen and heard the disciples on the mountain were being prepared to face up to the coming Calvary showdown between the burning fire and light of God's loving will and powerful self-centredness, manipulation and corruption Only later on, after the scandal of the Cross and the surprise of the resurrection, would they realise that this is what listening to Jesus meant for them.

It's much the same for us. Our joys and times of intimacy and insight pass on and life presses itself in on us. Then, and only then, can we feel the heat and fire burning behind the light. Only then can we come to see through the holy cloud to the weight held in God's commandment; that listening to Jesus means living by putting our footsteps into his. What we can be certain of is that lamp-light of Christ leads us to, and eventually through our sacrifices, into a new, better way of living, which in the words of Peter's letter is God's life rising within us like the shining morning star.