

In the great days of BBC Radio, before it became tainted by its obsession with its own persona and its bias towards certain causes, there was, during my youth, a great broadcaster called John Ebdon who, in beautifully modulated, patrician tones, gave amusing talks; always ending with the words: *'If you have been, thanks for listening.'*

He once told of how he was sitting in a train at Waterloo station, about to set off, when he looked out of the carriage window and saw a most wonderful sunset; vivid oranges and red streaks painting the early evening sky. He immediately exclaimed to his travelling companion, *'Will you look at that!'* at which his friend, leaned across, wiped his forefinger down the glass, examined the dust and grime on his finger tip and said, *'Yes, filthy, isn't it!'*

The friend, of course, has missed the point; his vision is still earth-bound, he cannot see beyond. If such might be true of many in regard to the physical beauty of this creation, it is certainly true of most when we speak of spiritual things. St Peter was once such a one, given to misinterpretation and to saying the wrong thing, uttering the inappropriate word.

Recently, Peter had been rebuked by Christ. He had just told his disciples that He must go up to Jerusalem, there to fulfill his destiny through death. And Peter, failing to understand, had blurted out, *'No, this must not happen!'* And here, on Mount Tabor, perceiving in a moment of created time, the Divine energy of Christ, manifested as light, even in this world, Peter manages once again to be distracted, to have his impetuous thoughts jump elsewhere.

*'Let us make three tabernacles.'* What is he thinking? Is it because he has Moses and Elijah and the Messiah all together? Does he want to capture the moment? Does he think this is the

kingdom come on earth? Or is it that the feast of Sukkot, the harvest feast of tabernacles, is soon to come, when the Jews make shelters and eat their meals in them, in imitation of their ancestors, newly freed from slavery in Egypt; cared for by God in the wilderness?

This time, however, Peter earns no rebuke, only the gentle voice of the Father is heard, hidden within, coming not this time from the storm-clouded, deep darkness from which God spoke to Moses on Sinai but rather out of the bright cloud that overshadowed them all: *'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him.'* At Christ's baptism the Father had stopped short; He had expressed His approval of His Son indeed, but here He adds, *'Hear Him.'* Pay attention, listen! Like the deacon at the Little Entrance, holding aloft the shining book of the gospels and crying out, *'Wisdom. Let us attend!'* Is not that moment in the Liturgy for us also an echo, a reverberation, of that Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor?

Indeed those three disciples had been privileged, gazing into the glory of the kingdom and with clear sight looking upon the divine nature of Christ, shining through his humanity. What a glorious experience! How we might imagine that our lives could be transformed, if only we had such moments! But we are called to live by faith not by sight, only we must *hear Him*, as instructed by the Father.

It is tempting to hide in tabernacles, to withdraw and take shelter from the world. But that is not our calling. That is for those summoned to live like angels in the monastic life but be assured: that way of life has its own struggles and crosses to bear and is no less a way of martyrdom, of witness.

Yet for all, the Liturgy can be the time of going up the mountain to experience, even now, that life of the kingdom to which we were destined ever since we were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. We need though, to be on our guard; it is so

easy to misread the signs, to speak profanely of what is holy, to see the dust rather than the sunset.

We live here according to natural rhythms, in cycles of time; of weeks and months, through the seasons and down the years. Through seed-time and harvest fruit is borne and fruits perish. And from the rot comes new growth and so nature is renewed in an endless turning round, or so it seems. No wonder the pagan religions, those born from the natural experience of mankind, conceive of Time as an endless cycle; birth and rebirth, the transmigration of souls doomed by the gods to reincarnate throughout the aeons in the perpetual stagnation of repetition: life going round in circles.

Not so, the children of Israel whose prophets foresaw the Τελος, the end to which God had destined His Creation. And this feast today of the Transfiguration of Our Lord teaches us the very purpose of our existence: not to be here in this world, endlessly renewed in changing forms but to be transfigured, to have *our* humanity become that of the Son of God; by grace to share in the divine nature and to participate in the divine energies, as St Peter himself tells us earlier in that Epistle we heard today.

Time moves on in this world but not forever. God the Father knows and has marked the times and seasons and they are finite; they will reach their consummation. We see this individually: our own time grows short! As death waits for each one of us, so it is with this Creation and our end in the mind of God is our glorification in eternity.

Yet it is not *because of* death that glory awaits us but rather *through it* that we are transfigured. For the pagan mind it is death itself that would cause them to reborn: there is no creation without destruction as they might say. But in the Christian perception, having the mind of Christ, it is just the road along which we journey; the way of the cross by which we must pass, if we are to reach the kingdom and attain to the resurrection of

the dead. Indeed, Christ has trampled down death by death. Death is but the instrument: the power is of God.

Down from Mount Tabor came Christ and His disciples and He warns them not to speak of the vision until after He is risen. Almost immediately they are embroiled in a controversy over how demons are cast out – we will hear that gospel next week. And we too must, in due time, be dismissed from the Liturgy and take our leave of this feast, not to forget what we have seen and heard and indeed, even tasted! We too must go back and engage with the world and our life in it, only, we must *hear Him*, as the Father has instructed. Well, Christ has indeed been raised from the dead now and the vision can and must be told abroad. We are not here to be going round in circles but in order to be transfigured.