
THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

Speaking Of His Exodus

If Moses could speak with authority about anything it must have been the Exodus, that great and fearful procession out of Egypt and slavery which he led by the power of the living God. Under the awesome burdens of it, Moses himself often quailed and cried out in fear. Like all the Israelites, Moses their leader had to learn how to trust the promises of God. Elijah too had to face the enmity of all the world as he spoke the words of God to it and against it; he came so close to despair that he begged God to take his life and end his agony, lonely and isolated as his vocation had made him. So the phrase that arrests me in today's Gospel is that Moses and Elijah were speaking with Jesus *about his exodus, which he would accomplish in Jerusalem*. Our Bible version calls it his *passing*, which sadly loses the reference to the great liberating deed by which the God of Israel wedded himself to his chosen people.

Taught By Prophets

We must all be taught what we are about by the prophets of God: not by time-serving politicians, or mercenary career-masters, or any of the countless predatory rogues and knaves who wander through the world for the ruin and domination of others. The world, as Jesus knew, is full of wolves, and their definition of us is likely to end in "dinner", as they plot to devour us for their own benefit. The Prophets of God, by contrast, speak to us in words that come from the Father, and we can trust their words and be led by them. Lent is a season full of the wisdom of prophets. They will speak to us about victory, and liberation, and the love of God: the Creator's triumph over chaos, as he carries those he has created into fulfilment, and makes them cry out: *Father, thy will be done!*

Climbing The Holy Mountain

The strenuous efforts of fasting, prayer, and sharing represent our climbing out of darkness into light, as we clear the mess of our mixed motives and cobbled compromise with the peaceful seeking for holiness, the unifying clarity of the Holy Spirit. Like Moses and Elijah, we will have to say goodbye to much that is false in our way of life; and we shouldn't pretend that it is an easy path that we tread. But the story in today's Gospel gives us the poetry we need, inspiring us to desire the gifts of grace in real preference over the

false gifts we are called to sacrifice on the way. To have our eyes blinded by the glory on the face of Christ is an unforgettable transfiguration *for us*; once glimpsed, his glory becomes the standard by which we judge all that falls short of him. It robs us of peace with "the empire of sin", and seals us for the kingdom of God for whose coming we long and pray every day. Thus we are revealed as foreigners, with a call to leave, to go out into the desert to offer sacrifice to our God: a people called to our own Exodus.

Wonderful To Be Here

How dull it must be if the only transfiguring image that has struck your soul is some poor thin creature waddling down a catwalk, or a spoilt brat with a "celebrity lifestyle"! If your Gospel is a business of career advancement leading to financial results, what limited room you have accepted for the soaring of the human spirit! What's essential for this flight is the thirst for transcendence – for reaching beyond ourselves to the divine goal - to the life of God. We need to see clearly that the simple fulfilment of human needs isn't enough to fuel our struggling human story. To be fed, warm, and housed, to be known and loved by others, to be able to share our gifts – these things are essential to us. But they aren't enough. When we have given ourselves to them, we must search beyond them for a greater meaning and a more perfect fulfilment. To become lost in acquiring more and more earthly security will not do. Because deep within us we carry the knowledge that earth has only one "secure" home for us in the end: the one we eloquently remembered on Ash Wednesday. The vision of Jesus, the son of man who is Son of God, is our gateway into the transcendence we need and for which we most deeply yearn. To catch sight of him, to establish him as our ideal, in whom we can believe with all our living hearts, is the Lenten gift for which our praying and fasting make room.

In The Cloud They Were Afraid

It is a draughty experience to give up our comforts and search for Christ. But not to find him, to become lost in an earthbound maze of hopelessness would be far worse. God is not outdone in generosity. If we offer our hearts to be formed by his grace this Lent, he will bless us immensely.

Fr Philip