

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

They Were Speaking Of His Passing

This year we are reading Mark's account of the Transfiguration, and how it fulfils the promise of Jesus that "some of those standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God in power".

Peter, James, John

The three closest of the Twelve are taken to the top of the mountain. Surely we aren't meant to wave them off on their climb: the Gospel takes us with them, we become partakers in this awesome event; surpassing Bartholomew, Simon, Jude, and the others in privilege, we too are allowed to see the Son of God in glory. We must reflect on the fact that these three were also singled out to come into the house of mourning, with Jairus, on the terrible day when people came to meet him from his house, saying, "*Your daughter is dead; why put the Master to any further trouble?*" and Jesus took Jairus by the shoulders and said: "*Fear not - only trust!*". They have already looked upon the glory of Christ in his works: now they see him glorified in himself. But we shall soon come to Holy Week, and see them taken aside once more, to share his prayer in the Garden; and then their weakness will buckle under the strain; and this despite Peter's "*Even if all fall away, I will not*" and the sons of Zebedee's "*Allow us places at your right hand and your left, in your glory!*" Luke is most charitable of the evangelists, when he says: *they were sleeping for sheer grief*. We might be better at seeing glory, than we are at seeing grief: I'm not sure. I think people are more often "acquainted with grief" than with glory; and Luke's Jesus tells us on the mourning road to Emmaus: "It was ordained that the Christ should *suffer* as he entered into glory!" Perhaps we have a healthy knowledge that suffering destroys humanity, and that we should oppose it and eliminate it whenever we can; like Peter, we find it hard to listen to the prediction of the Cross without protest. But Jesus calls this opposition *Satanic*, and we can't make it our own. Let's not think of Peter and the two brothers as privileged in their vision. Let's think of them as being with us, facing the Cross. Like them, we have seen and loved humanity, we have glimpsed the glory of God's image; why are we condemned to talk about suffering? Why can't we build the tabernacles, forget the Cross, and gaze on a transfigured Lord?

Coming Down From the Mountain

"Go down now," said the Lord to Moses, "because your people have apostatised." Then Moses came down from Sinai to face a nation worshipping a Golden Calf. We have to come down from our mountain experience to face a world that has not even started to think of Christ, much less climbed mountains with him. It is the will of God that our sufferings, our guilt, and our distance from the Father, should flow mysteriously into the life of his Son. He comes to us, not radiant from the heavens, but human, even in the depths. The brief revelation on the holy mountain illuminates his gifts to our darkened earth. Here we see who it is that has come to our side; he will allow no separation between himself and us, however short we may fall of his glory. *Go down now, says the Father, give them power to be children of God. Make them know the love of their Father. Go to their grave, and take off the stone, and call them out by their own name.* Of himself, Christ had no need to know suffering. He suffers because we suffer, he dies because we die; and his task is, despite all of this, to teach us the glorious love of the Father. So Luke tells us the precious truth that, even in his glory, *Moses and Elijah spoke with him of his passover*. This, in prophetic terms, is the prediction of the Passion, to which Peter refused to listen. But the message is vital to us. That is why the Father's voice says: *Listen to Him.*

Fr Philip