

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

Kairos

This useful Greek word refers to a *decisive moment*. Usually the Bible means a moment which is “the right time”; so *kairos* is a critical opportunity, a window we should take seriously. It is also usually *God’s time* – a moment that is chosen or designed by God to contain an especially important happening. When Jesus says: *My hour has not yet come*, he means that his *kairos* lies in the future. When he says to Jerusalem that the city *did not recognize the moment of her visitation*, he means that the *kairos* of Jerusalem is now past. You can see that the idea of this special moment requires that we should be wide awake, attentive.

The Transfiguration as *Kairos*

It is clear from the story we read in today’s Gospel that Jesus is arranging for some special moment. He “took with him” Peter James and John, and he “led them up a high mountain where they could be alone”. This was no everyday incident, nor was it an experience offered to everyone. There is selection, and seclusion: and in this privileged moment, there takes place the revelation of a mystery. So we have here a *kairos*, a moment in time and place that is specifically designed by God to be an epiphany of his Son.

The Place of Glory

There’s a good deal of consolation in what is familiar, and ordinary: when we awake in plenty of time, and potter round the familiar things among which we live, when the egg boils soundly and perfectly and the butter spreads easily and without grease, and the tea brews lusciously, and there is no rain or gloom, and the postman brings no big bills, and we feel well, and everything is obedient to us. But all of that isn’t enough for a human life. We have desires which go far beyond the ordinary and the mundane. Without straying into the realms of *folie de grandeur*, there is a place in human nature which seeks for glory. It doesn’t have to be pompous or grandiose; but it has to be real and it has to engage us totally. It may come in the greatness of a vast sky, or be microscopically small, the shape of a snowflake or the whirling of atomic structure. But *we will know it* when our heart swerves from its accustomed rhythm, and we awaken to something charged with such meaning, such purposive seriousness, or such overwhelming beauty, that we are stopped in our tracks, as if everything ordinary would now

need to be looked-at again, re-evaluated, in the light of this moment of truth. It is not just some external truth that we have seen. We have seen something which changes *us*, which reveals *us* in a new light. The *kairos* becomes a turning-point, to which we can return again and again to rediscover our meaning.

Jesus, our meaning

The truth is that the meaning of the human race in its totality is revealed in Jesus Christ. There is nothing in the experience of any person who lives, or has lived, or will live, that does not draw its whole meaning from the Son of God, in whom they were all created, in whom they find their light. I believe that the Transfiguration was the moment when three of us were privileged to see that, to know it perfectly and utterly, with no need for explication or key or theory. They *saw* it with their eyes, and their senses reeled with the fullness of its meaning. This was the moment when John’s phrase, *We saw his glory*, finds its place in Mark’s Gospel. For us, it means that our appetite, or capacity, for glory is there to lead us towards Christ. All other glimpses and intimations of glory are sparks and reflections, and can give us partial and shadowy images of the truth. To see Christ, as those three disciples did on top of the mountain, is to go to the fountainhead of humanity, where we shall find the whole truth - there, and nowhere else. Then we shall ask no more questions. *Fr Philip*