

## **Homily For Friday of the 18th Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1**

### **St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - August 6, 2021**

#### **(Feast of the Transfiguration)**

**Daniel 10:9-14** "The ancient of days took his throne. His clothing was white as snow."

**Psalms 97:1-9** "The Lord is king! Let the earth rejoice."

**Mark 9:2-10** "Up a high mountain, he was transfigured. His clothes became dazzling white."

### **See His Glory! Seek His Glory!**

#### **Introduction**

On this feast of the Transfiguration, we are nearing the end of the Olympics, which celebrate the glory of athletic achievement and tell the stories of those who fall short of that glory.

Yesterday, in four different Olympic athlete interviews, I heard each of them say, "I'm proud of myself for what I accomplished." It is pretty common in such interviews for someone to thank the team of people behind them, so it was a surprise to me to hear athlete after athlete so focussed on themselves. I'm sure each of them is grateful for their friends, family and team, but that's not what came across.

One athlete stood out as different amongst those others. That's gold medal decathlete, Damian Warner. If you get a chance to look up the CBC interview with him, I would recommend it highly. He was clearly very happy for his success, but his words focussed entirely on the support of his family and friends, and the coaches and therapists on his team. But, even more, he described himself as having received inspiration and mentoring from Canada's previous top decathlete, and how he hoped to be a similar role model and inspiration to another up and coming Canadian decathlete, who had finished fifth behind him. He saw his own glory in the light of those who came before and those who would come after.

## **Son of Man**

We had two choices for today's first reading. I chose the one from the prophet Daniel. Daniel has an apocalyptic vision. That means he had a 'revelation', a revealing of heaven and the glory of God. At a very dark time in the history of the people of God, Daniel saw clearly that, compared to the trials on earth, the heavenly realm is an intense and joyful experience of the worship of the glorious God, who has no beginning and no end, and has no equal.

Today heaven is often thought of as a continuous experience of the joys we experience on earth. Essentially, that idea makes heaven about us. What Daniel saw clearly demonstrates that heaven is ALL about God, whom he calls the Ancient of Days. The hundreds of millions who are there, are either serving God directly or worshipping him. That's the joy of heaven, to be in the presence of the glory. There is no pride in the individual souls who are there. There is only the joy of worshipping the one who is the source of all glory.

Then Daniel sees one coming who is like a Son of Man, being presented to the one on the throne. Before this, son of man just meant a human being. But, with this vision, Son of Man becomes a glorified and exalted figure, a Messiah. And who is that Son of Man, that Messiah? Jesus Christ, of course.

## **Transfigured**

Twice a year, the Church celebrates a different kind of glory, that of Jesus transfigured on Mt Tabor. Every year on the second Sunday of Lent, the Transfiguration forms part of the path to our experience of the cross and on to the ultimate glory of the resurrection. But, we also have this feast on a specific day, August 6, about six months later.

Peter, James and John were the three who would lead the young church after the resurrection. They were the ones Jesus took up the mountain to see his glory revealed. They saw that divine glory that Daniel dreamed about, bursting forth from his body. Their senses were filled with what they experienced. They saw "his clothes become dazzling white, such as no bleach could make it." They saw the

lawgiver, Moses, and the greatest prophet, Elijah, paying homage to the divinity of Jesus. They heard the Father declare on behalf of Jesus, "This is my Son, the beloved. Listen to him." Jesus didn't have to say how proud he was of his own glory. That glory is from all time and is everlasting. That glory would be tested by the powers of darkness at his betrayal and crucifixion, but would burst triumphantly into our realm at the resurrection. The Transfiguration is not a change in Jesus, but the Revelation of His Divinity. The Transfiguration is a foretaste of the Resurrection!

The three of them were terrified by what they saw. So much so that it tells us Peter did not know what to say. It always terrifies us to see the glory of God. "Rabbi, it is good that we are here!" (Mk 9:5). Later, these three will be overcome with terror and grief as they wait by a garden while Jesus sweats blood, while he prays to conform his will to the divine plan of salvation for the world. At this point Peter wants them all to set up residence and stay there. Later, the same three will flee from the exact same spot at Calvary, also called Moriah, where the beloved son, will be sacrificed by the hatred of the world.

St. Bede says that "Our Lord allowed Peter, James and John to enjoy for a very short time the contemplation of the happiness that lasts forever, so as to enable them to bear adversity with greater fortitude" (St. Bede).

In the alternate first reading for today, Peter declares that he did not make these things up. He saw them and reported everything: the unearthly dazzling whiteness of the Son and the voice of God.

### **Call To Action**

We have been pounded by messages of doom for 18 months now. I can't imagine how many hours of such messages we have all been exposed to. But, we are not a people who give in to fear. We Christians constantly hear Jesus words to those terrified by our natural experience of life's naturally terrifying storms: "It is I. Do not be afraid."

Notice that Jesus does not tell them not to be afraid at what they experienced. Unlike the terrors of this life, we are to be in awe and wonder at the glory of God's presence, on that mountain with Peter, James and John, but again with those right here at the table of the Eucharist, the continuing glorious presence of Jesus Christ.

Seek the face of God. See the face of God. Today, on this feast, let pride in our accomplishments give way to a stronger and stronger desire to be in the glorious presence of our God and Saviour.

### **Key Scripture Passages**

**Daniel:** *As I watched, the One who is Ancient of Days took his throne. His clothing was white as snow. A thousand thousands served him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him.*

**2 Peter:** *We did not follow cleverly devised myths but we had been eye witnesses of his majesty. We ourselves heard this voice from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain. You will do well to be attentive until the morning star rises in your hearts.*

**Psalms:** *The Lord is king! Let the earth rejoice.*

**Mark:** *Jesus led them up a high mountain. And he was transfigured. His clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. Elijah and Moses were talking with Jesus. Peter said: Rabbi, let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Peter did not know what to say, for they were terrified. From the cloud there came a voice: This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him! Suddenly, they saw only Jesus. He ordered them: Tell no one what you have seen until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.*