

This is My Son the Beloved

One day Jesus turns round to his disciples and asks them straight out “who do you think I am?” and it is Peter who, without any hesitation, cries out from the bottom of his heart, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”. It’s easy for us to say, “yes, of course, that’s what we believe” because we have the benefit of hindsight, the teaching of the Church and years of living with this knowledge at the centre of our lives, but for Peter to have said those words, even on the evidence of having lived with Jesus for a couple of years, is amazing. It is a revelation that comes out of the blue; even Jesus is amazed. He says, “Simon, son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven.”

Track forward a few days and we have the event that is described in today’s Gospel where Jesus takes Peter and the two other disciples up a high mountain and there, before their very eyes, he is dramatically transfigured, radiating a blindingly bright light that strikes confusion into his awestruck disciples, and then a shining cloud appears above Jesus’ head and a voice is heard coming from the cloud: “This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him”. These extraordinary events confirm for Peter the act of faith he made a few days before; they show that Jesus really is the Son of the Living God because the Living God has just endorsed him personally in Peter’s hearing.

Now we might say, sceptically, that this event, the Transfiguration, is the product of someone’s lively imagination. That is certainly not the case. This is one of the best attested happenings in the story of Jesus’ life being recorded by all the synoptics Gospels. We can say with a great degree of certainty that it is authentic and recorded accurately by the Gospel writers. If there were any doubt, the second reading today should dispel it,

for it is Peter's own first hand account of this amazing revelation of Jesus' divine nature as an eye witness. He writes:

It was not any cleverly invented myths that we were repeating when we brought you the knowledge of the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; we had seen his majesty for ourselves. He was honoured and glorified by God the Father, when the Sublime Glory itself spoke to him and said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour.' We heard this ourselves, spoken from heaven, when we were with him on the holy mountain.

So we have confirmation of what was said in prophecies; and you will be right to depend on prophecy and take it as a lamp for lighting a way through the dark until the dawn comes and the morning star rises in your minds.

With this amazing evidence of the authenticity of the claims that are made about Jesus that he really *is* the Son of the Living God, how can there ever be room for doubt in our minds of the truth of all that our faith teaches us, but, most importantly, about the life-saving, game-changing, necessity of becoming a true disciple of Jesus and putting him at the centre of our lives? As St Peter himself says, *you will be right to depend on [this truth] and take it as a lamp for lighting a way through the dark until the dawn comes and the morning star rises in your minds.*

Jesus showed his true nature as God to Peter and his friends on that mountain so that through all the events of Jesus' suffering and death they should never lose sight of the fact that, in spite of appearances, Jesus is the Son of God and Saviour of humankind and he will bring glorious victory out of seeming defeat. May this knowledge and certainty about the truth of who Jesus is carry us through all the sufferings and heartaches, pains and losses of our lives in the sure and certain hope that 'he will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body' (Phil 3.21) and bring us to new and everlasting life in him for all eternity.