

## **Blackrock, Cork**

21.08.06 The Transfiguration

### **Welcome**

The feast of the Transfiguration comes around twice each year: the second Sunday of Lent and today the 6th of August. It is a very important feast in the Orthodox Church and it is the patronal feast day of the Taizé ecumenical monastery in France. It is clearly important in the Gospel of Mark, at the start of the second part of the Gospel, which runs from 1-8 and 9-16.

### **Topic**

Can the feast speak to us today? Three comments can be made.

### **Steps**

The Transfiguration celebrates an elusive, mysterious event in the life of Jesus. He had some kind of mystical experience of the Father and in some way allowed his disciples to catch a glimpse of it all. Of their nature, such "happenings" cannot be literally described. That is why you always have common symbolic elements: a mountain, a cloud, a voice and so forth. The only one in the New Testament to have such an experience and to describe it in his own words is St Paul. In 2 Corinthians 12, he says "I heard unwordable words which no one is permitted to repeat." Such experiences are always beyond words; that is why symbol and metaphor are used to hold the experience for us.

Such events may seem remote from our ordinary experience, of course. Still, there are two phrases in the reading which might speak to us today. The first is this: Lord, it is good for us to be here. This is the feeling of many of us now that we can return to in-person worship. Chatting with friends on Zoom is fine; watching Mass on live streaming is fine. But nothing really is as good as meeting friends in person and being able to worship in person and receive the sacrament. So, yes, it is good for us to be here.

The other phrase is "Listen to him." How do we do that? Years ago, a British Dominican, Brian Davies, wrote a small catechism in which he asked the question: where is the Word of God to be found? The answer was wise: the Word of God is to be found chiefly in the Scriptures. Chiefly is very good: in other words, yes, in Scripture, but not only. God does speak to us through the holy readings – but also through people, through nature, through music and poetry and, above all, in the still small voice of our conscience. We can hear the word of God in so many ways – as long as we are disposed to listen, as long as we are "hearers of the Word."

### **Conclusion**

This important feast day can also be life-giving to us, as long as we recognise ourselves in the story. We too can say, Lord, it is good to be here. To us too the words are addressed: this is my son the beloved, listen to him. Amen.