

Dan 7: *I saw coming on the clouds of heaven one like a son of man.*

Ps 96: *the mountains melt like wax before the Lord of all the earth.*

2Pt 1: *We heard this spoken from heaven when we were with Him on the mountain*

Mt 17: 1–9: *in their presence He was transfigured: His face shone like the sun.*

Our clothes say a lot about ourselves, don't they? And we make a lot of judgments about others on the basis of what they wear, long before they have opened their mouth. Are they casual or smart; fashion-conscious or way behind the times; meek or a bit of a show-off; moneyed or strapped for cash; elegant or unkempt; ... the sort of person I'd like to talk to or the sort of person I'm going to do my best to avoid? We so often — and wrongly! — judge people by their appearance.

Then we sometimes have an amazing surprise, don't we? Someone usually dressed dowdily makes a bit of an effort and all of a sudden looks extremely attractive. Same person, same personality, same body — but suddenly we notice them, realize their beauty that was there all along, unnoticed by us. We're taken aback and see them in a new light even when they've dressed down again.

What would we have thought about Jesus from his earthly clothes? Would we have given Him a second look? Or would we just have thought, 'O there goes another one of those wandering preachers with a bunch of naïve followers'? But today He gets dressed up — He shows His majesty — He lets the Father put on Him the robe of divine majesty as in the Daniel prophecy. He leads Peter and James and John up the mountain to a new peak of faith, letting them see Him in the full beauty of the Son of God. His clothes become dazzlingly white, radiating the purity of His holiness, and the three apostles are taken aback. Jesus was someone they thought they knew: they knew His appearance, and now He was giving them a great surprise: the same person, the same body, but seen in a new light.

Why? Why take them up the mountain for this experience? Why relinquish the humility of His earthly body for these five minutes of glory, parading His divinity? Well, He had taken them up a mountain as God often took His people up a mountain to teach them something of Himself. On the mountain they would get a new

perspective, a new vision of life — above all, a new view of Him, clothed in a way they could never forget. It was an experience they *had* to remember, because they had some dark days to get through, and the radiant light of the transfigured Christ was all that was going to light those days. As the Preface of today's feast says: the Transfiguration was (i) *that the scandal of the Cross might be removed from the heart of His disciples* and (ii) *that He might show how in the Body of the whole Church is to be fulfilled what so wonderfully shone forth first in its Head*. So: this vision of Jesus transfigured had to give *them* hope as Jesus suffered and died — and it also has to give *us* hope as we await and long for our ultimate destiny with Jesus. The Transfiguration left the apostles in no doubt that Jesus was Son of God, that He was dependable, that they could rely on Him to light their way through the dark days; and He lights the way for us, right up to and through death, if we will take up that light and obey Him.

But we have to get used to Jesus not always being in heavenly raiment. Peter wanted to cling on to that perfect

moment, but it wasn't to be. They had to come down again off the mountain and face the world in which Jesus's divine splendour was not always visible. And we live in that same world in which the risen Jesus is powerfully active and yet His divinity is under wraps. Nowhere is that more noticeable than in the Eucharist, where the Lord's presence comes to us under the appearance of bread and wine. We have to approach the Eucharist from the perspective of the Transfiguration. That is, when we see Christ's body on the altar — dressed down, as it were — we think back to His appearance on the mountain. The Transfiguration confirmed faith; the Mass demands faith: yet from the earthly body of Jesus on Mt. Tabor and from His risen Body in the Blessed Sacrament shines out the same beauty of the divine presence. As Our Lord is lifted up at Mass in our sight let us gaze up at Him and pray as St Peter did on the mountain ... ***Lord, it is wonderful for us to be here.***