

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“Jesus took Peter, James and John up a high mountain and he was transfigured before them.”

Matthew 17: 1

There were any number of things that happened to Jesus in the course of his public ministry which indicate how his Father (Abba) was involved in what was going on. His baptism in the Jordan by John with the heavens opening and the Spirit descending and the Voice from the Cloud, “This is my beloved Son in who I am well pleased. Listen to him.” There is also the resurrection itself when Jesus is raised from death after his horrific agony on the cross. There is also the Ascension when Jesus is lifted up into the kingdom of Heaven after a job well done. And, of course today’s gospel reading would be yet another instance of the Father manifesting himself in Jesus’ life and ministry.

What the Father knows and what Jesus knows but which the apostles do not know, is that He is on his way to Jerusalem for the last time. He will be betrayed there, handed over there, tried, convicted and executed in a matter of hours there. What the Father does in the reading for today is to allow the true glory and inner beauty of Jesus to shine through him and literally transfigure him in the sight of the three apostles. Moses and Elijah, long in the grave, are summoned to give their own witness to this Jesus whom we will come to realize is the Word of God made flesh, the Incarnate One, the Messiah of the Lord. How was it that Peter, James and John could recognize Moses, who had been dead for twelve hundred years, means that this too was a revelation by the Father himself given to them.

To what purpose? Well, the Father knows that Jesus’ betrayal and crucifixion will so demoralize the apostles that they might not recover. So He reveals the true glory of his Son so that they will be able to remember after the crucifixion. It is in anticipation of his suffering that the Father gives them just a glimpse of his glory, of his true self, his true reality. The Father knows what they do need and what they will need. The Father sees to it. Jesus is the recipient and like his own Mother, says to his heavenly Father, “Let it be done to me as you say.” In the agony of the garden, he will say, “Not my will but thine be done.” Could it be that our Father wants us to remember the good things from our own past, as Jesus’ disciples did, when our own moment of facing the cross looms large? That is the question of the week.