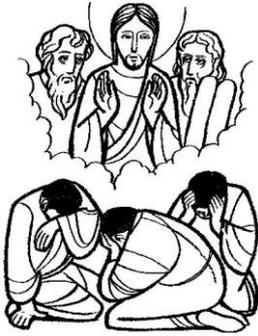


Homily for 2nd Sunday of Lent 2021



Did you know that this is London Fashion Week? Apparently 5000 journalists turn up for this, or I guess, watch online this year. Looking at the clothes, it is hard to see how, unless you were a model or a certain age and size, you would be able to wear much of it, but it makes a lot of money, so plenty of people must be interested.

I have to admit that I have never been at the height of fashion, unless somehow fashion has come round in full circle. I don't think my 70s velvet jacket that I was so proud of then has ever made it back though.

Yet what we wear is important to the extent that it says something about us, even if we do not realise it or want it to. People judge us by it, and comment upon it. Sometimes fairly, sometimes not. Did you have to wear that? Could you not have made a bit more effort? Or, like my Mum, 'I am not taking you to town in those trousers.' (That was some years ago I have to say.) All of these I have had said to me .

We can see whether people are interested in looking smart. Does it matter? In some cases it does, it is a matter of respect. It shows that we have made an effort for them.

Then sometimes we wear clothes as a statement about ourselves, to make a point that this is me. Perhaps as a protest. So clothes can be important.

The Bible refers to Jesus' clothes at certain important moments. They become an outward expression of what is happening to him.

Usually we talk about the transfiguration as a glimpse of the resurrection to come. And it certainly is. But we can compare what happens to Jesus on Mt. Tabor to another incident. As we come towards the end of Jesus' Passion one of the most significant Stations is when they strip him of his clothes. Partly, on the soldiers part, it is to destroy his dignity; to expose him to the ridicule of the crowd. But also because clothes distinguish us, and so stripped of these, they remove his identity, as human beings see it.

But at the same time, and this is not their intention, what they do is to reveal to everyone the savage way in which he has been treated. As they strip him of his garments the viciousness of what a human being can do to

another becomes exposed. Jesus' naked body becomes a picture of humanity. Suffering in innocence as so much of humanity is, bearing our wounds, and Jesus' dignity in this without worldly covering, but also the violence of fallen humanity. It exposes, not his crime or guilt, of which he has none, but the failure of his creation to love him. That it returns his love with anger and vitriol and pain.

But in today's gospel, God the Father, uses clothes to express to express an inward wonder about Jesus. Jesus holds within himself both our fallible humanity, but more importantly here the mystery of what it is to be God.

The clothes that I am sure are of no account or worth in themselves, suddenly reveal, by God's power, the truth about Jesus. Mark tries to tell us that these clothes are now transformed by a brightness that is beyond anything that the world can achieve, 'whiter than earthly bleacher could make them.' After the resurrection the angel appears in a white robe, nothing to compare with how Jesus is seen now.

Then the three apostles see Elijah and Moses, representing the Law and the Prophets, standing with Jesus who fulfils all that was promised in the Old Testament, which they represent.

God the Father says: 'Listen to him.' Why? Because here we have someone who both walks with us in all our suffering, who understands what it is to be a human being. But yet in the same body, united in Jesus himself, is the promise of our transfiguration. Of our humble lives, good and bad in equal measure, being perfected in God's love, made God-like.

Listen to him, because he knows us and he knows the right path for us.

Whatever we decide to wear, influenced by London Fashion Week or not, one of the definitions of prayer is standing naked before God. For most of us standing naked before anyone is not that appealing, but it means we open ourselves to God, literally warts and all. The good and bad of ourselves and ask him to accept us as we are, which he does.

In the transfiguration of his Son, God is promising us that our bodies, our whole selves, good and bad, are made worthy of this too, by his Son.