FROM MOUNT TABOR TO CALVARY

Bp. Michał Stobnicki

Dear faithful, when on this Second Sunday of Lent we hear the Gospel describing the Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus on Mount Tabor, when we hear how His face shone like the sun and His garments became white as snow, the thought may arise in our minds: is this not some mistake? Here we are in Lent, we mortify ourselves, we fast, and the Church reads us the Gospel describing the Transfiguration of the Lord. What is the Transfiguration of the Lord supposed to have to do with the Passion of the Lord? What does Mount Calvary have in common with Mount Tabor?

My dear ones, contrary to what seems so to us humanly, a great deal. For Jesus, as the Creator of our human nature, knows it perfectly well and knows perfectly well how easily we give way in the face of life's difficulties; He knows perfectly well how quickly our spiritual strength fails us, how quickly we give up our resolutions and promises. And that is precisely why today He prepares not only the holy Apostles Peter, James and John, but all of us for Good Friday, for the trials of our faith, for the crosses, the difficulties, the sufferings which here on earth we must face every single day.

Christ the Lord is preparing us for that day when Isaiah's prophecy of the Redeemer will be fulfilled: "He had no form or comeliness that we should look at Him, nor appearance that we should desire Him. Despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, like one from whom men hide their faces, despised, so that we held Him of no account." And precisely so that the difficulties and crosses that are coming should not halt us in our following of the Saviour, He appears to us today on Mount Tabor, shining with the radiance of His majesty. Today we see the face of the Lord Jesus, which shines like the sun. And the memory of that shining face becomes for all of us a source of hope. A source of hope that, when this journey of ours is over, this journey through a world shaken by winds and storms, a world sunk in darkness, we shall see once again the sun that knows no setting, our Lord Jesus Christ.

FAITH AND THE INTELLECT

My dear ones, the Son of God humbled Himself and became man because He wanted us to have the possibility of knowing Him and loving Him. For think: if the Lord Jesus shone all the time with even a little of His divine majesty, then we would probably cry out, like Saint Peter: "Lord, it is good that we are here, it is good for us to be here with You." But, overwhelmed by that feeling of happiness, by delight, by ecstasy, would we be able to come to know the Lord Jesus, to listen to what He says to us? And yet God gave us reason precisely so that here on earth we might come to know Him better every day. He gave us free will so that we might love Him and choose what He shows us.

Faith, my dear ones, contrary to what the modernists preach, is not a feeling, is not an impulse of the heart. It is not butterflies in the stomach. "I feel good when I come to my little church, when the little guitars play, when I clap a bit." That is a parody of faith. Faith is an act of the intellect. Of an intellect that bows before God, acknowledging His majesty, acknowledging that God can neither deceive Himself nor us. Faith is an act of the intellect, not of feeling.

Saint John Mary Vianney prays that God would not give him any spiritual consolations during the celebration of Holy Mass. Why? Because he would fear that he might begin to celebrate Holy Mass for the sake of those spiritual consolations, and not because, as a priest, he has the duty to render worship to God, One in the Holy Trinity. This is something, my dear ones, that must be spoken about, because modernism has destroyed the concept of faith. Faith today is identified with feeling, with religious experience, with butterflies in the stomach. Complete absurdity, my dear ones, complete nonsense, which a whole mass of so-called Catholics believe. Even within Tradition.

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

My dear ones, the Lord Jesus came into this world not in the glory of His divinity but in the humility of humanity, so that we might be able to know Him and love Him. And He knows perfectly well how weak we are. He knows perfectly well what the consequences of original sin are in our lives. He knows perfectly well in what way our human nature has been wounded by original sin. And that is why He did not leave us alone here on earth, but remained with us and gives us His grace, so that we might be able to heal this wounded nature, so that we might be able to fight against the consequences, the effects of original sin in our lives.

Christ the Lord, present in the Blessed Sacrament, feeds Catholic souls with His Body and Blood and sustains them in their warfare, in their journey toward heaven, so that we may not fall from exhaustion, so that we may have the strength to resist the storms of life, so that we may have the strength to know the will of God and to fulfil it. If you want to see the Lord Jesus, then go up the mountain of the Transfiguration. Approach God's altar, on which the Most Holy Sacrifice is offered. Come, and you will see there the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, hidden in the Host, in whiteness, shining with a love that can go no further, because it has already passed beyond everything.

EYES ON THE LIGHT

My dear ones, before we are ready, at the end of our life, for the meeting with the Saviour, so many of our sins must still burn away in the fire of penance. So many of our mistaken choices must still be purified in the water of God's truth. This, however, involves various renunciations, the necessity of doing penance, and may also involve doubts as to whether my efforts, my endeavours, have any meaning. Does it make sense to go to confession if I return to sin? Does it make sense to approach Holy Communion if I do not become a saint in the blink of an eye?

Dear faithful, Satan desires to do everything possible to call into question our efforts and endeavours to fulfil the will of God, to challenge the meaning of our Catholic life. And these endeavours, these diabolical attacks, are especially strong in our times. Especially strong in these times in which, my dear ones, we are deprived of that clear light which shows us the way leading to the harbour of salvation, to heaven. For it is so hard for us today to find true Catholic priests who will preach the true Gospel of God. There are so many false friends around us with whom we spend our time pleasantly, but with whom we can get no further than hellfire.

My dear ones, may this Second Sunday of Lent be for all of us an occasion to resolve to walk after the Lord Jesus, to resolve not to take our eyes, even for a moment, off the light with which He illumines the paths of our life. May this Second Sunday of Lent be an occasion for a firm resolution that we shall make every effort within our means, that even if it happens to us that we fall back into sin, we shall not lie in it like in the mud, but shall rise and go on.

And never forget that, if you wish to see the radiance of the Resurrection, you cannot remain today on Mount Tabor, but we must all move on with trust after Christ, after the Sorrowful Mother of God, all the way up to Mount Calvary. There is no morning and no radiance of the Resurrection without the pain, the doubts, the sufferings, of Good Friday.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Praised be Jesus Christ.