



Second Week of Lent and St Patrick: 13th/17th March 2022

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“The Transfiguration – we behold the splendor of God shining on the face of Jesus”

Recently I took a few days for a Pilgrimage – Break to Pembrokeshire, visiting St David’s, the Cathedral, and the coast. I hadn’t realised ‘til then that St David’s is one of those places that St Patrick is said to have come from, where he was captured and taken as a slave to Ireland at the age of 16 in the year 387. He was there for 6 years, working as a shepherd under harsh authority and often alone, hungry and cold. He says it was during those years that God’s presence became very real to him, and he began a close, intimate walk with the Lord. He wrote of his time in captivity: “the faith grew in me, and the spirit was roused, so that in a single day, I have said as many as a hundred prayers, and in the night nearly the same, so that whilst in the woods and on the mountains, even before the dawn, I was roused to prayer.” He wrote a famous prayer still recited today called the prayer of St Patrick or St Patrick’s Breastplate. Patrick escaped slavery and went to France where he trained under great St Germanus of Auxerre, who paid important visits to Britain on behalf of the Pope, and finally died at Ravenna in Italy.

Despite his bad treatment in Ireland as a slave, Patrick loved the people there and returned as a missionary sharing with them his love of Jesus and the Scriptures. In his “Confessio” No 60 he wrote: “The sun which we see rising for us each day at his command, that sun will never reign nor will its splendor continue forever; and all those who adore the sun will come to a bad miserable penalty. We, however, believe in and adore the true sun, that is, Christ, who will never perish. Nor will they perish who do his will but they will abide forever just as Christ will abide forever. He lives with God the Father almighty and with the Holy Spirit before the ages began, and now, and for all ages. Amen.”

The Gospel for the Second Sunday of Lent focusses on the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor: St Luke indicates that Jesus is praying and his appearance changes to bright light. In the Transfiguration, we see an anticipation of the glory of Jesus’ Resurrection. It is not until they also witness his Passion and Death that the disciples understand the Transfiguration. I chose the beautiful hymn “We behold the splendor of God shining on the face of Jesus” as the background to pictures, and the reading of the Psalm “The Lord is my light” for the “Burning Bush” VLOG this coming week. The hymn continues in Verse 2:

*“Jesus, Lord of Glory,
Jesus, beloved Son.
Oh how good to be with you;
how good to share your light,
how good to share your light.”*

St Patrick puts it this way in “the Breastplate” poem of faith and trust in God

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*Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.
I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.*

It was a joy for me to be asked to preach the Homily at the St Patrick's Day Mass in St Anne's, Digbeth, on the occasion of the Annual St Patrick's Parade (the nearest weekend to the Feast) and to link the Homily to both the Sunday readings and the Feast of St Patrick.

Patrick was a humble, pious, gentle man, whose love and total devotion to and trust in God should be a shining example to each of us. So complete was his trust in God, and of the importance of his mission, he feared nothing, not even death.

The Psalm for the Second Sunday, Psalm 26 concludes:

*"I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living.
Hope in Him, hold firm and take heart.
Hope in the Lord."*

As we reach out to the people of Ukraine in prayer and assistance in these difficult, horrific days, we pray that they may find strength through their deep Faith, that behind the clouds stands Jesus. May we too be renewed in our Faith Journey as we recall the example of the great St Patrick.

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