

After last Thursday morning Eucharist service the Rector and I had a brief chat and he expressed some insightful remarks into the story of Transfiguration. So I thank him for guiding and providing me into what I am about to share with you.

The Rector also wants us during this year's Lenten season to spend time on reflection. I am sure we have done it individually. But what about corporately, as the body of Christ? Individually we have different concerns and hence variety of reflections. But as the Body of Christ, there is just one concern and one reflection. That is to discern the mind of Christ. The story of Transfiguration provides us a very good opportunity to do it together.

'Let us make three booths,' said Peter and his fellow disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. Prior to this saying, and after seeing the beauty and glory of Jesus' transfiguration Peter had said, 'It is well that we are here.' In other words, Peter and his fellow disciples decided to stay in the mountain to continually capturing the beautiful vision of Jesus' transfiguration and in so doing forgot the sufferings and needs of people down in the valley. What a tranquility to forget the groaning of the world and behold the most glorifying vision of Jesus' transfiguration to neglect the plight of the world. What is the point of going back to where we were and face all sorts of oppositions from the recalcitrant people who refuse to listen to our proclamation? Why don't we stay put and continue to enjoy this mystic communion? Perhaps Peter and the subsequent church have been tempted to opt for the quietist position.

Let me explain what a quietist position is: What they understand the Good News is that God has acted. The mighty deed of salvation is achieved. In due course God will gather His Kingdom to himself. Therefore nothing remains to be done. The one thing required is to lead an inner devotional life which is to aim at personal holiness.

Let us call them Quietists. You are surprised to know that in Jesus' time such group had already existed. They were the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls. They retreated from the world and lived secluded life in order to avoid corruption and unholiness of the world. They did not believe that anything should be done on human side to usher in the K of G. What was needed was quietly waiting for its coming and be prepared to welcome it with private devotion and personal holiness. Did Jesus choose this option to launch his Kingdom movement? Jesus did stay in the wilderness for a while but in the end he knew that his movement could not be carried out by the quietist way.

Our Lord Jesus did not choose the quietist way. Nor should we. They have a wrong understanding of secular and spiritual world as if they were like water and oil that they can't mix together. In short they have a distorted view of God's created world. Furthermore, their wrong understanding of created world shows that they have a rather shallow view of sin and therefore they lack compassion on the vast agonies and miseries of men and women. A church that is content to remain isolated in sanctified seclusion is not fit to be called the Body of Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to the world and chose to dwell and eat and drink with publicans and sinners. We talk about the danger of compromising with the world. But the quietist way is not the alternative. The quietist church does not offer friendship in the name of Christ to the world. Small wonder the world rejects the quietist church with contempt. If the world rejects the church, make sure it does not reject us on this ground. We have failed our mission vocation.

The church has in fact faced this temptation perennially and it is so easy to fall into it. But our Lord's word is loud and clear: 'Let us go down to where we were!' This is where the desperate human situation is. One wonders whether Peter, James and

John demurred. Possibly they came down rather reluctantly. But they saw their Lord striding down the hill resolutely because He knew where the need of people was greatest. He could not stay out of it.

We see what is wrong with the quietist position. Now let us learn from another story recorded in the NT, which also involves Peter and see this time how dramatically he has changed.

The Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration becomes now the Peter on the housetop in Joppa in the book of Acts. Again Peter saw the heavenly vision and heard the voice of heaven; then suddenly, while pondering this heavenly vision, the loud knocking at the door beneath woke him up. Cornelius' men were looking for him, seeking to know Christ. But they were the Gentile world. Peter knew that devout Jews would have no dealing with Gentile whatsoever. Try to imagine what was going through in the mind of Peter. Both sounds were ringing in Peter's ears at once - the voice of God above, and the knock at the door below. Do we not see, at any given moment in history, Peter's experience is also the crisis of the Church, standing always between the housetop and the door, between revelation and mission, between the deed of God and the demand of men and women, between Christ the Redeemer and Cornelius crying to be redeemed. Peter had learned a lesson. He did not remain in the housetop. He went down the road to Caesarea and the Gentiles to face the needs of the world. But he went with high spirit because he had seen the vision of heaven. Now we see how the vision of heaven is transformed in to mission passion.

Dear members of St. John's, Gordon. You have been to St. John's, goodness knows how many years! Have you ever reflected you might have all along treated St. John's as a booth in the mountain? By the way, in the very good old days, St. John would have been seen very much situated in a hill, perhaps not as tall as the mountain

of transfiguration. Every Sunday you come and enjoy the very presence and beauty of the risen Lord in the Eucharist. Then you go home, but in fact you have never left the church! Have you ever noticed your suburb have changed so much that, as I am told, 30 percent inhabitants of Gordon are newly arrived migrants from China. We never take any note of them in shopping mall, train station, restaurants. We never ask the serious question: Have they heard of the gospel of our Lord Jesus? It is none of my business to care about their spiritual well-being. I am quite happy just to come to church every Sunday. I have done my duty which God require of me.

This morning by God's grace a new Cornelius stands in your midst, imploring you: Please come and help us and tell us the story and salvation of Jesus. We have never heard of the gospel in China, let alone salvation in Jesus Christ. Can you tell us?

Let me emphasise. This morning we are doing an exercise of reflection, to discern the mind of Christ in our midst. It is not deliberation. That will have to been done, perhaps at Annual Vestry Meeting and Parish Council. But a good outcome of deliberation depends very much on a careful reflection, where we have failed and where we can improve.

We often missed the crucial point of the Transfiguration. Out of the voice from heaven: Listen to Him. To discern the mind of Christ requires us to constantly listening to Him. Should we use the word Mass for HC or Eucharist, which I have no qualm about it, then let us be sure what the word means? It means Dismissal! The Risen Lord say to us: Get out!

