

## **TRANSFIGURATION**

It's wonderful to be here this weekend, in this beautiful church of St. Peter, in which we also commemorate our forebears in faith, the Winchester Martyrs. Thank you to Canon Paul, Fr. John, Fr. Paul Obada, the other parish clergy, the Sisters and to all of you, for all you do to witness to the Catholic Faith in this historic city.

In Portsmouth something I like doing with visitors is taking them up the Spinnaker Tower. It's fun if you don't mind the express lift or the glass floor on the observation deck. From the top, you get a stunning view over the harbour, the Isle of Wight and the south coast. As with any great height, you can stay there for ages, just taking in the view: Where are we? Where am I going? What's happening in my life? As St. Thomas Aquinas says, Beauty is one of God's attributes and mountains in the Bible, as places of natural beauty are linked with God's presence, which is why hiking, climbing and panoramas often have a spiritual quality. St. Leo says, Jesus took the disciples up Mt Tabor to prepare them for his coming death. He wanted them not to lose heart, and so in their sight, he was transfigured. Jesus let them see through his humanity to his inner identity as God the Son. Indeed, He gave them a revelation of the Blessed Trinity. For as *the cloud came down*, a symbol of the Spirit, the Father's voice boomed: *This is my Son; listen to him*. No wonder St. Peter exclaimed: *Lord, it's wonderful for us to be here!*

A disciple, from the Latin *disciplina* discipline, is a pupil, a student, an apprentice to a master, not an expert, teacher and authority, but one on the Way, a listener, a learner. As Christ's disciples, all of us are 'works in progress,' on the move, people led by the Spirit, *under* the Word of God. Today's liturgy reminds us of this, as Abram was told: *Leave your country, your family and your father's house for the land I will show you*. In 2ndR, St. Paul told St. Timothy *to bear hardships for the sake of the Good News*, and in the Gospel, the apostles were led up a mountain. In Lent, the Liturgy is all about journeys, transcending our comfort zones, leaving where we are now, in order to reach a place of great happiness God will show us. 18 months ago, when the Nuncio informed me that the holy father wanted me to be the Bishop, I said *I've never been to Portsmouth!* to which he replied *You'll like it*. He was right! As a priest, you have to move around a lot. But so do all of us as disciples. To be a disciple

of Christ means to leave the past, to be a life-long pilgrim, to change in mind, heart and deed, to be led by the Lord where he wants us to go, and ultimately to reach heaven.

*Lord, it's wonderful for us to be here!* As we gather in this Eucharistic Assembly on the 2nd Sunday of our Lenten journey, the Readings are challenging us to change. This process of transfiguration of soul and body takes a lifetime. It is brought about above all by the Sacraments. In Confession, Jesus forgives us our sins, renews our lives and gives us a fresh start. And in the Mass, Jesus exceeds the miracle of Tabor as we listen to His Voice and receive His Body and Blood, the Food of Immortality that enables us one day to pass-over in Him to the new life of heaven. So in this Mass, let us pray for a good Lent. Let's ask God to bless our works of prayer, self-denial and charity. Let us ensure we get to Confession. Indeed, may we be so transfigured that one day we will be found worthy to enter Paradise and be able to exclaim with Peter, James and John: *Lord, it's wonderful for us to be here!*