

Homily: Rt Rev Kieran Conry, Bishop of Arundel and Brighton

Joshua Camp on Monday 6 August 2012

It is a very happy coincidence that we celebrate the Feast of the Lord's Transfiguration today. What this story tells us is what you are celebrating here in the Joshua Camp and what we as a world are celebrating in the Games because it seems to me that two things happen in this story.

The first thing that happens is that Jesus is transfigured in the sight of the Apostles. What this means is that they are given a sight of future glory. It is particularly important at that point in the gospel because Jesus is about to tell them that he has to suffer and die. And so it becomes a very important source of hope for the apostles.

The second thing that happens, and it is more clear in Matthew's gospel, is that the disciples want to build two tents: one for Moses and one for Elijah,

The first idea of the story of hope is an important story for our time and our culture. When James Parker was speaking earlier he spoke of the loss of God in our contemporary society. It is easy to think that we live in a time of crisis. I don't think it is true. I don't think we are that privileged or special to live in a time of crisis for the Church has been in crisis since the cock crowed the first time. But our society has lost its way. In the middle of our society there has appeared a big empty space, a vacuum where God used to be. Our mission as believers and members of the Church is to put God back into that space.

We are also to be a witness to hope in our society. Society in this country knows it needs to change and that we cannot go on as we are. And our mission is, I believe, to show our society how to live and the values that we claim and hold onto as Christians. Our values and beliefs are what our society needs very much. As well as love, it needs hope and faith.

The second story of the two tents that the three disciples want to make for Moses and Elijah is very important. What the disciples want to do is to go back to the past. They want to go back to a place where everything was safe and where they knew what was happening. Jesus says "no, we go forward", towards the Cross, towards a place of challenge and death. Many people in our society and in our Church want to go back to the way things were.

I think we must go forward and face the challenges, the suffering and face the sacrifice. It is not an easy thing to be a young Catholic in the world today. It is not easy even to be an old Catholic today! But that is the challenge facing us and that is the challenge that you are taking on. It will not be easy but in the end we go towards the vision of glory that the Lord gives us. Do not become discouraged. Do not become afraid. Do not become anxious. The vision that the Lord offers us today of the Transfiguration is real. We now need to find the way there.