



*St Luke's in the City*

150 years - 2009

# **Celebrating at the Crossroads**

## **10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

9 August 2009

### **TRANSFIGURATION**

Last Thursday marked the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hiroshima Day. When two thermonuclear devices were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki more people were killed than imaginable, hundreds of thousands suffered life-long and life-shortening illnesses resulting from radiation poisoning. The atomic event, actually began months earlier in the Arizona desert at a location perversely dubbed 'Trinity', is the beginning of a truly new era in not only human history, moreover, in evolution itself.

With an arresting synchronicity, August 6 is the day the Church marks as the Feast of the Transfiguration, recalling when Jesus took the disciples Peter, James and John up the mountain and his glory was revealed. But 20 centuries later the dazzling cloud that overawed Peter, James and John seems to 'modern man' but a pale glow, blasted by a blinding flash which caused us all to blink. Eyes stunned by the sight of Jesus, Moses and Elijah on the mountain; minds failing to comprehend what they had seen. Faces scorched by thermonuclear wind; humankind's innocence vapourised in atomic fire. The Jesuit paleontologist and priest Pere Teilhard de Chardin, writing in 1946, grasped the momentous significance of what had happened: "Having realised his dream of creating a thunder-clap, Man, stunned by his success, looked inward and sought by the glare of the lighting his own hand had loosed to understand its effect upon himself. His body was safe; but what happened to his soul?"

Unlike many others, however - for whom the atomic flash left an indelible imprint of gloom and terror, a nightmarish picture of radioactive and fiery death to all of life as we know it - Pere Teilhard's eyes saw the beginning of something entirely new and hopeful. "A door had decidedly been forced open, giving access to a new and supposedly inviolable compartment of the universe." Inquisitiveness and mathematics had opened human eyes to a truly new depth. Evolution took a novel turn. Energy locked up in the depths of cosmic time, a secret, as it were, at the very heart of the universe, was released. "In exploding the atom we took our first bite at the fruit of the great discovery, and this was enough for a taste to enter our mouths that can never be washed away: the taste for super-creativity."

Hiroshima stands as an unforgettable reminder that this 'super-creativity', this awesome evolutionary development, has the potential to create misery and destruction on a scale previously unimagined. Unrivalled power in the hands of unconscious men and women spells doom. And yet medical procedures performed in thousands of hospitals around the world every day witness to an enfolded 'good news' in the atomic mystery.

What has happened to the human soul? According to Pere Teilhard, the atomic fire illuminates the very spiritual depths of not only the earth, but of life itself, the ultimate end of Evolution. Like Peter, James and John called to make sense of what they saw on that mountainside. The collective human vocation is to stare the atomic mystery squarely in the eye, resisting equally the urge to shield our eyes, on the one hand, to grasp the power of the atomic mystery for ego-centric ends on the other. We can never forget the taste. Evolution cannot be reversed. Let us pray that the witness of Christ's disciples to the mystery of crucifixion-resurrection enables us all to choose between destruction and 'super-creativity'.

*Fr David*