



O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair

Text: Sarum Breviary, Salisbury, 1495

Tune: English, 15th century

The Transfiguration of Our Lord is more than a transitional day in the Church Year. While it is often thought about as the end of the Epiphany season, it is really a foreshadowing. Not only does it give Peter, James, and John a revelation of Jesus' glory, but it reveals to us what we will be. The glory of Jesus, namely the light of His righteousness, is promised to us in Baptism and will be made ours when our perfected bodies are reunited with our waiting souls at the Resurrection of the Dead on the Last Day. For this reason, the Transfiguration of Our Lord gives us great hope, not only as we embark on the somber season of Lent, but as we await our own resurrection.

The hymn, "O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair" is one of the greatest hymns for the Transfiguration. It comes from the *Sarum Rite*, properly called the *Use of Salisbury*. The liturgical goings on of the Roman Catholic Church are prescribed by the Missal (everything needed for the conduct of the Divine Service) and Breviary (everything needed for the daily prayer offices). However, variants have been permitted from time to time in certain places. One of the most notable variants of the Roman Rite was the Sarum Rite, established by Osmund, the Bishop of Salisbury, in the eleventh century. The Sarum Rite became widely popular and was eventually used throughout all of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland until the Reformation arrived in England in the late sixteenth century. Despite its abandonment, it heavily influenced the Anglican liturgy as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. Despite its disappearance, many Anglicans and Roman Catholics have made attempts at the revival of the Sarum Rite, but its return has never been widespread.

The most notable part of the Sarum Rite is the elaborate splendor of the ceremonial that takes place, not only in the Divine Service but also in the daily prayer offices. For the Divine Service, the Celebrant (Pastor presiding at the service) was assisted by anywhere from three to seven deacons and as many subdeacons, at least two thurifers (the person who carried the incense), and three cross bearers. The choir was led by two or four *Rectores Chori* (Rulers of the Choir), priests who wore elaborate vestments. Finally, there was a ritual fan used at the altar. In the Service of the Sacrament one of the deacons waved a highly ornamented fan over the celebrant. During prayer offices, in the Roman Rite, the high altar (the church's main altar) is not used. However, the Sarum Rite called for priests to stand at the high altar and incense it during the Readings. Though Lutherans did not adopt any of Sarum's ceremonial aspects, it did take on two parts of Sarum's lectionary (the calendar of Readings for the Sunday Divine Service). In the historic Roman Rite, a different Gospel was appointed for the First Sunday of Advent. However, Sarum prescribed Matthew 21, Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Also, Sarum numbers the summer Sundays as Sundays after Trinity, not Sundays after Pentecost as was done in the Roman Rite.

"O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair" is part of an explosion of hymnody that came from the Sarum Breviary, the book which prescribed the readings and hymns for the daily prayer offices. It is the hymn prescribed for Matins on the day of Transfiguration. It refers to the Transfiguration as a *type*. A type is a foreshadowing of something to come. The Transfiguration is a type of Christ's resurrection and reign in heaven. Just as His glory was revealed there, so will it be after His resurrection. Stanza two gives a retelling of the events on the mountain. Stanza three begins to apply this event in Our Lord's life to our lives. For us, the faithful, those "who joy in God with perfect love," we, too, will inherit this glory, made ours by faith. What we see of Jesus at His Transfiguration will be ours at the Resurrection of the Dead on the Last Day. This vision raises our hearts on high (st. 4), preparing us to endure all that this life may throw at us, knowing that our future is certain. We pray that we are kept steadfast in this faith until we are brought to see Christ's glory face to face (st. 5), forever in eternity.