

Dearly beloved: Christ is among us!

Today we continue rejoicing in the feast of our Lord Jesus Christ's Transfiguration which we celebrated yesterday. Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John, ascending Mount Tabor. There these three apostles witnessed with their own eyes the divine glory of the Son of God shine through His human body. They saw with Him Moses and Elijah. They heard the Father's voice "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Hear him!" (Matthew 17:5) They were overshadowed by a bright cloud and fell on their faces in fear. They were overwhelmed by what they saw.

"Jesus' human flesh became as transparent as crystal, 'The divine power shone as through panes of glass, resplendent for those whose hearts are pure to see it.' Christ the Lord reveals for an instant the permanent state that His body would have after the Resurrection, and that the bodies of the saints possess in the Kingdom of Heaven, in order to confirm the Apostles and prepare them for test of His Passion."

We sing of this in the Kontakion, "On the Mountain You were Transfigured, O Christ God, / And Your disciples beheld Your glory as far as they could see it; / So that when they would behold You crucified, / They would understand that Your suffering was voluntary, / And would proclaim to the world, / That You are truly the Radiance of the Father!" Jesus' Transfiguration on Mount Tabor is connected to His death upon the Cross. In His earthly body the Son of God revealed His eternal glory as God so that Peter, James and John would know that in suffering death on the Cross Jesus did so of His own will, not because He was forced to be crucified. By tradition the Transfiguration of the Lord took place forty days before His crucifixion. In keeping this connection the Church celebrates the Transfiguration forty days before the feast of our Lord's Cross, the wood upon which He was crucified, September 14.

The glory of God that shines on the Transfiguration is a glorious light that is for us, also. Saint Peter, one of the eye-witnesses of the Transfiguration wrote, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." (2 Peter 1:18-19) He is telling us that God's light is not foreign to us. It is our natural state. To the extent that we do not reflect God's light, to that extent we are in a fallen state. To the extent that we show compassion to one another, are charitable to each other, look to see the image of God in each other, to that extent it is God Who is shining through in us. If we light a candle and cover it with a box, its light will be hidden. But if we cover the lighted candle with a clear glass globe, the light shines through the glass, providing illumination. This is how we look when we live in Christ. His light shines in us, through us, to those around us. Some may see and understand and others may not understand at all. But our life in Christ is not about whether others understand but whether by the words we say, by the thoughts we make our own, the deeds that we do, whether in all these we allow ourselves to become transparent, like glass, allowing God to shine forth in us for His glory and to our salvation.

This is the joy of our lives as Christians: to so live in Christ that He shines in us, that we by grace become what He is by nature. There are saints who shone like that in their own lives. We may not walk down the street as brilliant as the sun but we are called to aspire to that, to live in Christ through the Holy Spirit that we reflect the light of our heavenly Father to Whose Kingdom we all are journeying. To Him be glory together with the Son and Spirit to ages of ages. Amen.