

Homily 18th Sunday The Transfiguration Year A 2023

I hope that Saint Gregory of Palamas will forgive me for adding a few comments to his text on the Transfiguration but he expresses it better than I ever could. The introduction by Robert Cornwall also adapted.

On Sunday we climb the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus, along with Peter, James, and John and we will again hear what happens to Jesus on Mount Tabor. This is a defining event in the life of Jesus. For Peter, James, and John catch a glimpse of who Jesus truly is. It is clear, however that the Gospel can only give a poor image of the whole experience which defies verbal expression being an experience that we call Mystical.

Is there more to the story than we've allowed ourselves to experience? We are told that when Peter, James, and John witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus, there were terrified, which is why Peter didn't know what to say to Jesus. Then, no sooner had he offered to build booths/tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, God spoke to them from the heavens, letting them know that Jesus was the Son, the beloved, and that they should listen to him.

We would do well to ask what happened up there on the mountain that terrified these three followers of Jesus? Could it be that they saw something that they could not comprehend, something **we** might find difficult to comprehend? Some theologians argue that it is only through a mystical experience that we can ever experience (or see) the divine light present in Jesus. Lossky, [*Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*](#), pp. 220-221] writes "most of the Fathers who speak of the Transfiguration witness to the divine and uncreated nature of the light which appeared to the Apostles, that they saw emanating from Jesus. The light seen by the apostles on Mount Tabor is proper to God, is of His nature. It is eternal, infinite and it is something that exists outside space and time. This is the light that appeared in the theophanies of the Old Testament as the glory of God. Think of the experience of the people of Israel when Moses came down from the Mountain with the ten commandments on the tablets of stone. He had to cover his face because they covered before the light that shone from him.

St. Gregory Palamas writes in *The Saving Work of Christ: Sermons by Saint Gregory Palamas* (pp. 45-46)

Given that when He was transfigured the Lord shone and displayed glory, splendour and light, and He will come again as He was seen by His disciples on the mountain. This raises the question of whether this means that He somehow took this light to Himself and will have forever something He did not have before? Perish the blasphemous thought! Because for anyone who says so imagines that Christ has three natures: the divine, the human, and the one belonging to this light. This would mean that Jesus did not manifest a radiance other than that which He already had invisibly. He possessed the splendour of the divine nature hidden within himself, under His flesh. This light, then, is the light of the Godhead and therefore it is uncreated. According to the theologians, *when Christ was transfigured, He neither received anything different, nor was changed into anything different, but was revealed to His disciples as He was, opening their eyes and giving sight to the blind.* Take note that eyes with natural vision are blind to that light. It is invisible, and those who behold it do so not simply with their bodily eyes, but with eyes transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hopefully, you will see that this is the light that is given to you in baptism. This is what people experience in you when the Holy Spirit opens their eyes to the light that is transformative.

Blessed be God! Blessed be God! Blessed be God in the highest!!

A butcher is shooin' away a dog from his shop when he spots a £20 note and a piece of paper in his mouth stating: "10 pork chops, please."

Amazed, he takes the money, puts a bag of pork chops in the dog's mouth, and quickly closes the shop.

He follows the dog and watches him wait for a green light, look both ways, and trot across the road to a bus stop. The dog checks the timetable and sits on the bench. When a bus arrives, he walks around to the front and looks at the number, then boards the bus. The butcher follows, dumbstruck. After a while he stands on his back paws to push the "stop" bell, then the butcher follows him off. The dog runs up to a house and drops his bag on the step. He goes back down the path, takes a big run, and throws himself - WHAP! - against the door. He does this again and again. No answer. So, he jumps on a wall, walks around the garden, beats his head against a window, jumps off, and waits at the front door. A big guy opens it and starts cursing and shouting at the dog.

The butcher runs up and screams at the guy: "What on earth are you doing? This dog's a genius!" The owner responds, **"Genius, you must be joking. This is the second time this week he's forgotten his keys!"**