

2nd Sunday of Lent

The Transfiguration of the Lord, a Foretaste of the Glory That Will Be Ours

Dear brothers and sisters last Sunday, which was the first Sunday of Lent presented to us the Gospel passage on the Lord's forty days sojourn in the desert and his temptation. In his responses to the ancient serpent, the Lord gave us the three weapons: fasting, almsgiving and prayer with which to defeat the tempter. This Sunday presents us with the Gospel passage about the Transfiguration of the Lord on the holy mountain. This is preceded by first and second readings as usual. The first reading is about the covenant the Lord made with Abraham in which "a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the split pieces of "a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram"(Genesis 15:9, 17). In that episode, the Lord promised progeny and land to Abraham : "Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be"(Genesis 15:5). Further, the Lord said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18). The Promised Land and progeny point to our heavenly homeland and eternal life of definitive happiness and communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and all the Blessed.

Sharing the same theme with the responsorial Psalm the second reading speaks about the destination of our earthly pilgrimage in these words, "Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself" (Philippians 3:20).

In the light of these rich fare which the Lord gave us in the readings today, we shall center our homily today on the Transfiguration of the Lord, a foretaste of the glory that will be ours. In the transfiguration, we encounter the kind of revelation of God in the form of a glory cloud that took place when Moses ascended mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments (Exodus [Ex 19:16–20:17](#)) and on the tenth of meeting (Exodus 40: 34-35) and in the temple of God in Jerusalem at the time of its dedication (1 Kings 8:10). It is the same glory cloud that angel Gabriel said will descend upon Mary during the Annunciation. We can see that this cloud signifies the presence of the Holy Spirit. Hence, when the cloud enveloped the Lord and three disciples on the holy Mountain, they were enveloped by God's presence. The consequent voice of the Father that was heard declaring Jesus his beloved son and commanding us to listen to him replicates the event of the baptism of the Lord (Luke 3:21-22).

Looking at the event of Transfiguration more closely, one cannot help observe that it took place right after the Lord had spoken to his disciples about his impending suffering, death and resurrection, which he concluded with an urgent appeal to them to take up their crosses and follow him. In a way, through his transfiguration the Lord thus assured his disciples that his suffering and death would lead to his glory. His life does not end in shame. It goes without saying that the Lord was telling us that when we go through harrowing experiences for his sake, that it will not end in ignominy but glory. In the Sermon both on mount and plain the Lord spoke clearly of this when he said, "Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven" (Matthew 5:11-12).Speaking of the disparity between the nature of the suffering of the present time and the glory that would be revealed St Paul noted that, "This momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all

comparison”(2 Corinthians 4:6-7, 17). Let us now turn our attention to the other events of the Transfiguration. Very striking is the sudden appearance of Moses and Elijah, the two great personages from the OT who symbolized the Law and the Prophets. The Lord’s conversation with them was on the theme of his exodus which he would accomplish in Jerusalem, the city of destiny (Luke 9:51). Exodus not only calls to mind the journey of the Israelites from slavery to freedom, but also of the Passover of the Lord’s death, resurrection and ascension to the Father. This event made clear to the disciples that the one who with them was the Messiah of God spoken of by the Torah and the Prophets. The event of the Transfiguration gives them a cushion against the impending shaking of their faith which the suffering and crucifixion of the Lord would bring.

St Thomas Aquinas reflecting on this insight in an imaginary conversation with the Lord wrote, “You were transfigured on the mountain, and your disciples as much as they were capable of it, beheld your glory, O Christ our God, so that when they should see you crucified they would understand that your Passion was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that you truly are the splendor of the Father” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 45, 4, *ad* 2).

Meditating on the significance of the Transfiguration, the Bride of Christ noted that,

On the threshold of the public life; baptism; on the threshold of the Passover the Transfiguration. Jesus’ baptism proclaimed the "the mystery of the first regeneration", namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration "is the sacrament of the second regeneration; our own Resurrection. From now on we share in the Lord's Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ. The Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body. But it also recalls that "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God (CCC 556).

Dear brothers and sisters our religion is not a fable. It is founded in God. It is the light from the face of Christ which the Catholic Church reflects that will save our society from self-destruction, violence and all forms of vices that plague it. “God who said, Let light shine out of darkness; has shone in our hearts to bring to light the knowledge of the glory of God on the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6-7, 17). Christ is the light of the world and it is in his teaching that the light shines for humanity.

St Peter who was a witness of the Transfiguration put it clearly, “We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father, when that unique declaration came to him from the majestic glory, “This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (2 Peter 1:16-17).

The other unmistakable significance of the Transfiguration is the revelation of the three persons in one God. Byzantine Liturgy speaks eloquently of this, “The whole Trinity appeared: the Father in the voice; the Son in the man; the Spirit in the shining cloud”(Feast of the Transfiguration, *Kontakion*). Our response is to do what the Father asked us to do. That is to listen to his Son. Dear brothers and sisters if today you hear his voice harden not your hearts. With the Psalmist we say to him, “Of you my heart has spoken: Seek his face. It is your face, O Lord, that I seek; hide not your face from me” (Psalm 27:8-9).