



My Beloved Ones,

Over the next two Sundays, we will commemorate two great events in our Lord's Ministry: His miraculous Feeding of the Five Thousand & His Transfiguration. We are especially blessed, because the Transfiguration falls on Sunday in 2023, and so the usual rubrics for the Divine Liturgy are replaced by the celebratory Liturgy of the Transfiguration.

In the Feeding of the Five Thousand & the Transfiguration, we have two different kinds of miracles: the first, our Lord gave to help others, while the Transfiguration happened to Him. However, in some ways, these are similar: they both glorify Jesus, and they also offer strength to us as human beings, whether in body or in soul.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand begins after Christ spends a day healing a large crowd, and by the evening, the Disciples say to Him, *"This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves"* (Matthew 14:15). In fact, the Gospel says, the crowd is actually *"...five thousand men, **besides** women and children"* (Matthew 14:21). When Christ tells the Twelve, *"They need not go away; you give them something to eat"* the Disciples are frustrated! *"They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish'"* (Matthew 14:16-17). Their hearts are so hardened they cannot hear that the Lord is teaching them about loving your neighbor unconditionally.

When our Lord brings Peter, James, and John with Him to Mount Tabor, St. Matthew tells us that *"...he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white"* (Matthew 17:2). Next to Him are Moses and Elijah, and in St. Luke's account of the same event, we read that the Prophets *"...spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem"* (Luke 9:31). Completing the miraculous event, the voice of the Father is heard telling the Disciples, *"This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"* (Matthew 17:5). We celebrate the Transfiguration on August 6<sup>th</sup>, because this date is 40 days before the Elevation of the Holy Cross (on September 14<sup>th</sup>), and Holy Tradition tells us that the Transfiguration occurred 40 days before the Lord's Crucifixion. Our Lord knows that Disciples' hearts will be tested. Peter has already proclaimed his belief that Christ is the Son of God, but he will later deny knowing Jesus.

Jesus showed the Disciples His divine glory to strengthen their hearts and minds, as after the Transfiguration he told them, *"Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead"* (Matthew 17:9). In the same way, He also strengthens the bodies and souls of the Five Thousand, when *"Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds"* (Matthew 14:19).

My beloved ones, St Matthew ends his account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand by telling us that *"...all ate and were filled..."* (Matthew 14:20). Both then and during the Transfiguration, the Disciples came away remembering that their Master was the Creator of all, despite their hard hearts and human weaknesses. As Disciples ourselves, we also can fail to walk in a Christ-like way, but we should take comfort, because He will always forgive us our sins, always holding us up and supporting us, so that one day we can live eternally with Him in his fully revealed glory.

**+ALEXIOS**  
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