

## **The Transfiguration of the Lord**

**Homily: Based on Dn 7:9-10,13-14; 2 Pt 1: 16-19; Mt 17: 1-9**

**To walk in the light of Christ by opening the eyes of our souls. Listen to Jesus - we shall move forward trusting in His mercy and compassion knowing that the Lord will purify, strengthen and transform us.**

Every year on August 6, we celebrate the feast of the transfiguration of the Lord. The Transfiguration of Jesus is one of the major mysteries in the life of Jesus. Jesus takes with him the trio Peter, James and John, up the mountain of Tabor and reveals to them the glory of his true identity as the Son of God. The experience gives the threesome a foretaste of heaven. This is signified by his dazzling white clothes. Peter wants to preserve the moment. He wants to erect tents. He is overwhelmed and terrified by the experience, yet he does not want it to end. 'The experience strengthens the faith of the disciples Peter, James and John. Their experience is narrated to us so that we too can deepen our faith.

'The word 'transfiguration' is derived from the Latin word *transfigurare* which is equivalent to the Greek word *metamorphosis* meaning 'change of form and appearance. It is a change that is glorifying, exalting and spiritual. The event of the Transfiguration occurred immediately after Jesus had announced to his disciples that he was destined to be handed over to the Jewish authorities, to the chief priests and the teachers of the law, to be condemned to death. This announcement of Jesus caused great confusion in the disciples because they were expecting a messiah who would establish the Messianic Kingdom. The Gospels make it abundantly clear that the disciples were not expecting a divine or spiritual Messiah but a leader like King David who would rule the nation in righteousness and integrity.

In the face of such confusion and weakening faith, Jesus wants to reassure them the presence and the power of God. He takes them to a high mountain where they could be free from any of the distractions of the world. Peter, James and John are exhorted through a voice that came from the Father. The disciples are challenged for a moment to confront their own pessimistic thoughts and overcome them. It was in an atmosphere of silence, solitude and peace that they witnessed the glory of God shine in Jesus.

All of us would like to have the Transfiguration experience in our lives. We all have the longing for a transformation, but we do not want to accept the fact that it can happen only through a process of dying. A casualty that normally happens to our spiritual life is the failure to encounter the Messiah in silence. Our common temptation is to give up on our prayer. We want fast and easy results in our spiritual endeavors. Our minds wander and we give up. We cannot hope to be transfigured if we are constantly looking for quick spiritual results without making progress in personal holiness. The invitation today is to press on in faithfulness and not to lose heart. The darkness that we experience is momentary and soon we shall experience the blessed life in Christ. Our own transfiguration will happen at a time when God transforms us by the power of his grace.

The revelation made at the Transfiguration is not something that can be conveyed in simple ideas or words. It can be experienced only in the way Peter, James, and John experienced, that is, when the Lord opened their eyes to see and enabled them to hear the voice of the Father. What they experienced was not thoughts or feelings about Christ but Him in reality as the Son of God. The Feast of the transfiguration invites us to walk in the light of Christ by opening the eyes of our souls. We shall move forward trusting in His mercy and compassion knowing that the Lord will purify, strengthen and transform us.

The transfiguration apparently is a onetime event in the life of Jesus - so unique that three gospels speak of it and Peter refers to it in one of his letters - which is the second reading for today. What is so unique about it? Jesus' special and unique nature revealed itself on other occasions such as walking on water, calming a storm, healing the sick, raising the dead and feeding a group of a few thousand people in a miraculous way with five loaves and two fish. The transfiguration seems especially unique because it is a miracle that comes out of his very self - not to be repeated again until his resurrection.

Dear Friends, the transfiguration happened in fact to boost the Apostles' faith as well as to strengthen Jesus' faithfulness to the mission of his suffering which was rapidly approaching. Suppose someone ask me what God looked like, I would rather say I do not know. Then he may say "you're supposed to know that kind of stuff." God hasn't appeared to me, but if we could see God, it would involve seeing him with our mind and heart. I think to see him with our eyes in the fullness of his glory would be too powerful for our senses and our body to endure.

Today's gospel gives us a hint of the glory that could not be seen in Jesus, except on this one occasion. Of course, his glory did shine more brightly after his resurrection. What can we take with us from today's feast? The main thing is the word of God regarding Jesus: "This is my beloved son: listen to him." Listening to him presupposes that we take time to reflect on his teachings. In the transfiguration event, Moses represents the Law, and Elijah represents the prophets, but here is the perfect master and Lord of both. Peter expresses his desire to make three dwellings like a normal human, whereas God asks Him to listen to His Son, Jesus. How much are we dedicating ourselves to listening to the word of God?

In the first reading, King Belshazzar of Babylon receives an eschatological vision. Daniel explains and interprets the dream of the king. The vision was about God the Father sitting on the Judgment seat and destroying the evil one and Jesus beside Him.

The three functions of Jesus viz. Priestly, kingly and prophetic are mentioned here. As Paul says in his letters, we need to have Jesus in whom we should have our existence. Only by knowing Jesus do we come to know God and our true nature. We need to acknowledge Jesus as our Lord. Our task is to introspect how deep our faith is and whether we acknowledge Jesus as our Lord. Let us pray that our faith may be increased and thus we may experience the Lord in the celebration of this Holy Eucharist and in the events of our everyday life.

Happy Feast of the Transfiguration