

Epiphany is the season of light, it is the light that first came and was shone January 6<sup>th</sup> on Epiphany day as the light of the world was revealed by a star that led the wise men to the Christ child. Christ continued throughout this Epiphany season as we heard the texts from the Sermon on the Mount, blessed are you, you are the light of the world. And now the culmination of light. In rays of brilliant glory, His face shines to show all who He is. His garments are even transfigured by the reflection from His brilliant body. Moses and Elijah appear, speaking with Jesus, each demonstrating that this man is the Son of God of whom they promised in the Old Testament. Later, with the same words of Jesus' Baptism, God the Father proclaims Jesus to be the Son of God. Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and shining with brilliance, how can we not desire always to be in that presence? As we stand on the edge of Lent, a season of penitence and preparation for Holy Week, it seems as though we have stood here in glory by this mount of Transfiguration and now we must pass through the shadow death. It seems as though the Transfiguration, though it momentarily showed Jesus in glory merely prepares for the darkness which He must soon endure.

There was nothing about the human being Jesus that made him stick out from the crowd as being something different. He was like us in all humanly ways, except the presence of sin in His flesh. He experienced childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. He had emotions, He felt disappointment, and He could bleed. The hardships of life were written on His face, just as they are written on the faces of all of us.

On the mount of transfiguration something changed. The veil was drawn back. It was no longer the face of a servant which the disciples saw, but the face of God. Peter, James, and John did not see a fading reflected glory of God, but they saw the very face of God, the enduring glory of God. On this mountain, the veil was removed and Christ's glory, once hidden is now revealed. The Holy presence of God fully revealed in the presence of unholy men.

Peter, James, and John quickly recognized the magnitude of this experience. They immediately cast themselves down with their faces to the ground. If God's glory was not hidden from them, they would have to hide themselves from it.

The highest order of faith is to see Jesus as an ordinary man and still believe His Word that He is God's Son, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the savior and redeemer of mankind. "A voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One, listen to Him!" This is what the Church is about! That we listen to the words Christ speaks to His Church. He is the presence of God among us, the Word of God made flesh, in him is located the kingdom of God. Heaven on earth.

The Father's voice from heaven pinpoints very specific words of His Chosen One Jesus. Jesus' passion predictions physically surround and permeate the Transfiguration account. The radiant glory we hear about in the Gospel text is to shine light on the glory of God in His suffering and death. Right before the Transfiguration Jesus says, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

What did Moses and Elijah and Jesus speak of? In Luke's Gospel account we are told they spoke of his departure, his exodus. Soon Jesus will proclaim, "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."

Jesus' Exodus refers to what will be fulfilled in Jerusalem in His death, resurrection and ascension. Jesus was soon to offer His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. This would free His people from slavery to sin. He will lead His people to the promised land of eternal life. In the first exodus from Egypt, God's people were brought out of bondage by the means of water. It was used to bring death to pursuing Egyptian foes and continued life for the fleeing Israelites. In the new exodus God pours water over you and kills your sinful flesh that wants to keep us in bondage to the ways of this world. In that lavish washing he proclaims through His Son, your sins are washed away. That water brings you a transfiguration, a change, and alteration to our lives in the desert of this world. As Moses led the Israelites to the Promised Land, so now Jesus will lead us, His people, to the promised eternal glory.

These are the words the Father wishes for us to listen to out of Jesus' mouth. The Transfiguration takes on a resurrection-like quality with Jesus' change of appearance, but it is to show us that suffering must come before glory. Christ proclaims so vividly that there is a glorious, heavenly conclusion to His brutal suffering and death and thus to our struggle-filled existence on this earth. The Transfiguration is the commemoration of God's glory, which does not exclude, but includes the suffering of Jesus. God's glory includes suffering.

Transfiguration Sunday bridges the sweet memories of Christmas and Epiphany to the sad tragedies of Lent. Suffering comes before glory, haze before clarity and unbelief before faith. It is with that we need to recognize our catastrophic failures as Children of God to give a bold witness of what our glory is, what our exodus is, what transfigures us as Christians. That is the work Christ accomplished in Jerusalem. He is not transfigured into radiance on the cross, but His face, body and cloths are disfigured. He is no longer surrounded by the Prophets of Old, but by voices that shout, "Crucify Him". He is disfigured so that you maybe eternally transfigured, changed, altered from your selfish sinful state into a redeemed child of God without spot or blemish.

In one sense the Mount of Transfiguration and the Mount of Crucifixion might be considered opposing images – glory versus suffering. But in truth, these two mountains must be seen together. Even as Christ's appearance changed on the Mount of Transfiguration to a greater glory from that which was seen before, so also Christ's appearance changed on the Mount of Crucifixion to a greater glory that even that of His transfiguration.

In Christ's death, the love of God was revealed to the dark world – the darkness is gone, the light has come. On His cross, Christ accomplished what His Father sent Him to do – redeem you from sin, death, and Satan – and to restore you to His Father. The Son of God was pleasing to His Father at His Baptism and at His Transfiguration. And so also, Christ was pleasing to His Father in His death. For in His death and in the shedding of His blood, Christ undid the Fall of Man into sin, drew you out of the dark pit of death into the light of Life, and restored you to His Father.

The glory of Christ's transfiguration continues to shine from the glory of His cross. His glory continues to shine on His bride, the Church. With the filth of sin removed in Baptism, the veil is drawn back so that the light of Christ shines upon you. Though weak in body and soul, you are made strong and whole in body and soul as you eat of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. All this Christ has done for you and to you. The darkness has passed away. Death has been vanquished. And through Christ's holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death, the veil of sin which separates you from God is removed. The light has come. Life in Christ is yours. Your sins are forgiven. You are the light of the world.

In the name of our transfigured, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Lord Jesus. Amen!