

## The Transfiguration

In some cultures, when a person comes to terms with death, especially in their old age, he looks back to see how he will be remembered. Some people calculate their achievements and failures. Some revisit their youthful and up to date decision. Finally, most weigh the quiddity of their heirs, heiresses and successors. The conclusion to these issues marks the difference between the ones who die happily and the ones who die sadly. This was applicable to Jesus life and mission. Jesus had been transfiguring in the lives of his disciples. The same is true in the lives of those who turn to him for restoration, forgiveness and salvation. His disciples had witnessed all these. They witnessed his curing of different sicknesses. They were there as he cast out demons. They were there when he raised the dead. They saw him perform miracles. The aim was not only for them to see what Jesus can do, but through what they had seen and heard, they could be his witness from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and to the end of the world (Acts 1:8). But, they were very slow in learning. Jesus was frustrated many times for their lack of vision and understanding. Jesus once confronted Philip: “have I been with you all this time and you still do not know me Philip?” In another incident, when Jesus was teaching them to beware of the doctrines of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, they concluded that Jesus needed them to bring more bread along (Matthew 16:1-2). When Jesus was explaining to them about his nearing betrayal, suffering and death, perhaps he was seeking some comforting encouragement from them. All he got was a “big dispute” among them regarding who was the greatest among them. Jesus, used that opportunity to deliver a teaching on Christian and ecclesial leadership, (Luke 22:27). The truth is, at that time, the disciples were not ready to be the bearers of the gospel message to the salvation of others. At this point, Jesus wouldn’t entrust them with their own restoration, forgiveness and salvation. He tried to teach them on the humanly natural and plain level. But, the more he tries the clearer it appears that it must take a supernaturally divine setting and a journey away from the ordinary for them to understand. Hence the journey up to mount Tabor where the transfiguration took place. The transfiguration was meant for the disciples to learn not just from the man Jesus of Nazareth, but more so from Christ, the Son of God as he tarries with Moses and Elijah. The presence of Moses and Elijah indicates transition. Moses and Elijah appeared to hand over the baton of human salvation to Jesus. As they had sacrificially worked hard for the salvation of God’s people, so must Jesus continue from where they stopped. (You know that Jesus intended to hand over this same baton to his disciples. This must be why their tardiness worried him.)

Let us reflect on the importance and significance to the images found in today’s gospel:

- The temptation of Abraham: When God tests us as he did Abraham, he means to help us understand the strength of our faith, the depth of his love for us, his abiding and dependable presence so that we may fully rely in his presence.
- The transfiguration was not for Jesus, it was rather for his disciples so that they may have something concrete, which they may return to after the shame of the cross; after betrayal and desertion. On the mountain of the transfiguration, Peter, James and John

learned that Jesus' suffering and death would lead directly to the glory of his Resurrection, (Mark 9:10).

- Earlier in Luke, mother Mary pleaded with her children to "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). Today the voice of the Father repeats the same dictum; "listen to him" (Mark 9:7). Therefore, my beloved, we must listen to him and do whatever he tells us.
- Notice that the disciples did not understand what "rising from the dead" meant. So, don't be frustrated when you don't understand it all.

Peter, James and John were to be the principal witness to the gospel. They were witnesses when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead. They were present at the Transfiguration. They were also present at Gethsemane, the garden of sorrow where Jesus was arrested. They were to know Jesus best and understand him most. All that Jesus had done in their presence was to prepare them for this moment in Gethsemane, but because they did not truly listen, they ran away when he needed them most.

Concerning us, we are learning from Jesus' teachings and from the disciples' mistakes. Every trial is meant to strengthen our relationship with God and with one another. We must listen to Jesus and do everything he tells us. The Church is called to put into practice all she has heard from Jesus and all she has learned from his disciples. If we listen to Jesus as the Father instructs us, then we will be able to transfigure one another into our original image of God's likeness. If we refuse to listen to him, then we will disfigure each other into monsters.

**Mission: Continue the Prayer of the Faithful till we meet next Sunday.**

Your brother and Priest,

Father Chrysogonus