

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD; Aug. 6th 2023
Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14:2 Peter 1:16-19; Matthew 17: 1-9

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Every year the Church celebrates the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord on August 6th, no matter whatever day it commences. At the Transfiguration Jesus' true nature as the son of God was disclosed and the assurance of his future glorification was given by his Father. The Transfiguration is also an assurance of our own future glory as followers of Christ in heaven.

During his public ministry Jesus always avoided the media attention or the publicity. Even after working a miracle he warned the beneficiaries not to publish it. Jesus appeared to be like any ordinary rabbi. He always ran away from any sort of exaltation the crowd would bestow upon him. If that was the case, we may ask the question, then, why did Jesus take his three disciples, Peter, James and John to a mountain and revealed before them his glory and divinity through Transfiguration?

In order to get the answer of this question we need to go back to Luke 9: 18ff. Perhaps, by that time Jesus was half way to the completion of his ministry on earth and he was curious to know how people understood him. So he asked his disciples, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" In the view of some people Jesus was John the Baptist; others thought that he was Elijah or one of the prophets. Being disappointed by these answers Jesus asked again his disciples, "**But who do you say that I am?**" Simon Peter answered, "**The Messiah of God.**" Jesus' positive note of acceptance gave his disciples a sort of *'aha experience'* for which they have been waiting.

But the immediate prediction of Jesus of his imminent passion and death on the cross cast a bombshell in their excitement. For, they were expecting Jesus to be a **political Messiah** who would drive out the Romans from Palestine and capture the throne of David, the king. According to Mark's gospel 8, the disappointed Peter makes a futile attempt to prevent Jesus from such a tragedy which resulted in the intimidation of Jesus to Peter. In a way, it was sure that Jesus was going to lose a small band of men at the last moment. So according to Scripture Scholars, Jesus had no other option before him other than to reveal his true identity before his disciples and confirm their trust in him. The transfiguration helped the disciples to regain their faith and moral courage and know the glorification awaiting Jesus.

The Transfiguration was very helpful to Jesus too, for once again God the Father revealed Himself with his similar statement which he made at the Baptism of Jesus,

“This is my chosen Son; listen to him.” This was the assurance for Jesus that he was the Son of God, the Messiah and his last journey to Jerusalem for the crucifixion was the right choice of the Father. The appearance of Moses and Elijah is significant. Moses was the Law giver and Elijah, the greatest of all Old Testament Prophets. With their presence Jesus was reminded that he was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Luke, while narrating the event of Transfiguration says in his gospel that Moses and Elijah were conversing with Jesus of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. The exodus was nothing but his journey to the mount of Calvary and the crucifixion. These two great men too gave Jesus the assurance that he was going along the right path and right destination. **Jesus’ Transfiguration of the body was nothing but the re-assurance of the glory, the resurrection, awaiting him beyond his crucifixion and tragic death.** In others words, his crucifixion was not the end of everything.

As Jesus revealed his true identity, glory and divinity at the Transfiguration, the disciples got a new life in their faith in Jesus. But they had to accept the fact that only through passion and death the glory could be attained. No doubt, their material ambitions and dreams disappeared and for the disciples this was the foretaste of their own glorified life awaiting them beyond this world which gave them courage and hope to accept even martyrdom. **They realized that the cross was not a symbol of humiliation and defeat; rather the way to the crown.**

The transfiguration of Jesus has similar lesson for each Christian. If we have real faith in Jesus, one day at the end of our earthly pilgrimage which is filled with trials, suffering and crosses we too reach a state of glorification in heaven with Jesus. There is not an easy way or shortcut to achieve our glorification other than following Jesus up to the mount of Calvary and being crucified with him. At the Transfiguration the Heavenly Father announces, **“This is my beloved Son, listen to him.”** This is what is important for our glorification in heaven that we have to listen to Jesus, means we have to believe and accept Jesus as the beloved Son of God and our savior. It is not enough that we are just baptized Christians that our eternal glorification is granted. Jesus says, **“Everyone who believes in the Son of Man will have eternal life” (John 3:15).** Again in v. 18 Jesus continues, **“Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the only Son of God.”**