

HOMILY ON THE DIVINE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SAVIOR August 6  
(For Sunday 9/8/2020)

On Mount Tabor, to the amazement of His three Disciples, Jesus *"was transfigured before them; His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light"* (Matthew 17:2). His disciples were accustomed to seeing their Master as a simple man, and for the first time they see Him radiating a bright, supernatural light like the sun. To add to the surprise, the prophets Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus, talking to Him. In this way, they confirmed that Jesus was the Messiah, whose coming into the world as Savior had been foretold centuries earlier. The awe of the Disciples was complete when, through a bright cloud that covered them, they heard the voice of God the Father say to them, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am pleased; hear Him"* (Matthew 17:5).

The Transfiguration, as the hymns of the Church teach, happened in order to strengthen the Lord's Disciples and their faith in Him. This was so they would not be wounded and discouraged, when they later saw His horrible Passion and death on the Cross! He saved them from despair, and they were empowered in their later apostolic journeys to the nations, to boldly declare that Jesus is the true God. Later in his Second Epistle, St. Peter emphasizes the truth of the Transfiguration of the Lord, speaking as an actual witness to the event: *"We did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we're eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain"* (2 Peter 1: 16-18).

It should be emphasized here that, during His Transfiguration, the Lord revealed (as was possible for His Disciples to understand) His Divine Glory, which has always been present as God. We sing at the end of each Divine Liturgy that God is *"the true Light,"* a supernatural light that has nothing to do with actual sunlight. The Evangelists note **that it shone "like the sun,"** because they knew no other measure of comparison to describe the light that was radiating from the face of Christ. This is why they noted that the Light of the Transfiguration **is different from the light of the sun.** The Holy Fathers describe this Divine light as "uncreated," meaning that it is not created like other kinds of light, but it is eternal, like God, without beginning or end. At that time, the Lord revealed His Grace through His all-powerful Body, showing that the Glory of His human nature surrounds His Church. As St. Paul the Apostle says, the Church is the Body of Christ. The faithful who are part of the Church (joined with the Lord's Body) also participate in the divine glory and Grace of God, like the two Prophets and three Disciples who were under the bright cloud (see verse 5).

The conversation Jesus had with the two Prophets at the time of His divine Transfiguration about the imminent death on the Cross also reveals the close relationship between these two events. The common feature of both is glory. Christ showed His glory not only on Tabor, but also Golgotha, no matter how contradictory that may seem to us! Jesus Himself said the night before He was arrested and crucified: *"Now is the time for the glory of the Son of man to be revealed, and God the Father to be glorified in Him"* (John 13:31).

Every faithful Christian, when they endure persecution and sorrow, by their patience and courage participate in the sufferings of Christ. They glorify God, and in turn are glorified by Him. When the Lord foretold to St. Peter how he would end his life, the Evangelist

explains, "*This He (Jesus) spoke signifying by what death he (Peter) would glorify God*" (John 21:19). The Transfiguration of the Lord is support, consolation, hope and life for humanity. People of all ages are strengthened, and receive comfort from heaven, just as the Disciples were strengthened. When the tested person faithfully takes refuge in the Almighty Lord, enduring the pain of this crucified life, they feel their hearts softened and souls relieved. Their inner world is filled with courage, faith, patience, hope, and love. Those who lift up their cross, next to Christ, and cry out with the robber, "*Remember me, Lord, when You come into Your kingdom*" (Luke 23:42), are assured by the Lord that "*the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*" (Matthew 13:43). Amen.