

## The Feast of the Transfiguration

The Transfiguration is one of the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels. This miracle is unique among the others in that the miracle happens to Jesus Himself. In the Gospel accounts Jesus along with Peter, John and James go to Mount Tabor. On the mountain Jesus begins to shine with bright rays of light, and the prophets Elijah and Moses appear and speak to Him. Jesus is then called “Son” by a voice in the sky.

The Transfiguration is seen as a theophany, a manifestation of the Holy Trinity: of the Son in the person of Jesus; the Spirit in the bright, overshadowing cloud; and the Father in the voice from the cloud. There is a link between the Feasts of Christ’s Baptism and his Transfiguration, for both involve the activity and manifestation of the Trinity.

In Christian teachings, the Transfiguration is a pivotal moment, and the setting on the mountain is presented as the point where human nature meets God: the meeting place for the temporal and the eternal, with Jesus himself as the connecting point, acting as the bridge between heaven and earth.

For the apostles the transfiguration formed part of their training. It should have disposed them to believe in the divinity of Christ, even during His passion and death. In particular, the three favored apostles should have become sufficiently mature to remain faithful during their Master’s deepest humiliation on Olivet and Calvary.

For us the transfiguration is, and will always remain, heaven’s testimony to Christ’s divinity. All the miracles of Christ served this end, to reveal the divinity of Christ. Jesus passed His life on earth as a poor, ordinary, simple Jew. But at the transfiguration, He threw off the dark mantle of humanity and revealed Himself in full divine splendor. In spirit we gaze upon Him glorified and say: “Lord, I believe. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Yet another truth is proclaimed in today’s mystery: that some day we too will be glorified.

What is the importance of the transfiguration to the liturgy itself? Remember, the liturgical texts not only serve to give instruction; their principal function is to signify that which actually takes place. What once happened during the night on Mount Tabor happens again every time the holy Sacrifice is offered. We may see only the simple appearances upon the altar, but with the eyes of faith we behold the glorified Christ; we see, in fact, the King of glory with His court, the saints of the Old and New Covenant. Liturgy actualizes in our very presence the sanctifying act of Christ at His transfiguration.

It is, therefore, not only Christ who becomes transfigured — He allows us to share His glory. The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of the transfiguration, for it is “the seed of glory.” The purpose of the liturgy is the divine transfiguration of the participants.

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