

Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord A2023

The transfiguration of our Lord up the mountain is the manifestation of his divinity and the revelation of his hidden identity. It is an important moment in the life of our Lord and that of the disciples. It is also an anticipation of the glory the Father has prepared for us and which he will give us at the end of our pilgrimage on earth.

To explain you the stakes of this feat, let me use a human analogy. We know that each one of us has an identity. To define that identity, society, as an organized body, attributes to each person what we call an identity card. In that sense, the identity paper is the personification of the individual by which he can be legally recognized for who he is.

This document has a great value as it distinguishes one individual from another. Without it, we cannot legally be recognized and there can even be confusion about who we are. But, everybody agrees also that this document, as important as it is, cannot replace the individual. Of course, it legally represents the individual, but it is not the individual. The individual exists independently from the paper representing him we call the identity card. It follows, then, that the individual exists even without the identity document on his possession.

From this example, let us learn two things: first, each individual has two faces. There is the visible face that people see and recognize and, sometimes, identify as that person and not someone else. That is the person as he appears externally. Second, there is the invisible face of the person that nobody can see or define, which makes the internal aspect of the individual and which constitutes his true personality.

Such an example clarifies the mystery of the identity of our Lord and the revelation expressed in his transfiguration. In fact, the people who approached our Lord were limited only to one aspect of what they saw from outside. They certainly knew our Lord, but in the external aspect of his life as he appeared to them. In truth, our Lord was more than what they could see. In him, the glory of God was present. It is that glory that has appeared in his transfiguration. The transfiguration has destroyed the wall that prevented people from seeing our Lord in his true identity.

Consequently, our Lord is not only the one who has to suffer, but also the one in whom the glory of the Father resides. He is not only the son of man, but also the son of God. That vision of things helps understand why our Lord took with him Peter, James and John up the mountain. As the disciples were scandalized when our Lord talked to them about his Passion and death, he wanted these three chosen friend to be the witnesses of the glory that the Father has prepared for him. Therefore, even if he had to go through suffering and death, the meaning of his life was more than the event of his passion.

In the same way, when the disciples will suffer persecution and rejection, they had to know that they are prepared to share in the glory of our Lord. It is not only about the disciples alone, but also about us, who will believe in our Lord through the work of his disciples; we will participate in the same glory.

That is why the glory that the three friends have seen on the mountain is the glory that awaits us all at the end of our pilgrimage on earth. That glory sheds light on the cross of Jesus and gives meaning to his identity as the one who had to suffer and die in order to rise to new life.

In the same way, we understand that we cannot be true followers of Jesus without accepting our part of the cross. However, whatever might be our hardships and suffering, these are not the last word of our life. The last word is glory, joy and resurrection. In that sense, the identity of our Lord sheds light on our own identity as his disciples. Like him, we will die, for sure, but in order to rise to new life. With him, we will reign in the glory of the Father.

In the transfiguration on the mountain, our Lord appears talking with Moses and Elijah. Here we have an evident sign and an assurance that he is from the line of those important figures of the history of salvation. He is a trustworthy and a dependable person in whom are united the Law and the prophets. Therefore, everything people want to know about God's Law and the prophets is in him. That is why the voice from heaven clearly recommended the disciples and, us alike, to listen to him.

Let me now finish with two important testimonies confirming the hidden identity of our Lord. The first is the vision of the prophet Daniel: After Daniel saw the Ancient One in glory and adored by thousands and thousands of creatures, he also saw the Son of man. As the Son of man came in the presence of the Ancient One, he received dominion, glory, and kingship; and all peoples, nations, and language served him. It is that glory of our Lord that was anticipated in his transfiguration, confirming thus that like Father, so is the Son.

The Second witness is that of Saint Peter. Peter was one of the three eyewitnesses of the majesty and the power, the glory and the honor that our Lord received from the Father. He is a dependable source and a reliable witness. We will do well to be attentive to the message he communicates to us, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and the morning starts rises in our hearts.

Let us, then, brothers and sisters, yearn to take part in that glory. May God help us to accept with patience the suffering of the present time with the assurance that we are prepared to share in the glory of our Lord in heaven.

Daniel 7: 9-10, 13-15; 2 Peter 1: 16-19; Matthew 17: 1-9



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