

The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

Readings & Hymns



Troparion, Transfiguration - Tone 7

Thou wast transfigured on the Mount, O Christ God, / revealing Thy glory to Thy Disciples as far as they could bear it. / Let Thine everlasting Light also shine upon us sinners! // Through the prayers of the Theotokos! O Giver of Light, glory to Thee!

Konatakion, Transfiguration - Tone 7

On the mountain wast Thou transfigured, O Christ God, / and Thy Disciples beheld Thy glory as far as they could see it; / so that when they would behold Thee crucified, / they would understand that Thy suffering was voluntary, / and would proclaim to the world // that Thou art truly the Radiance of the Father.

PSALMS & READINGS AT DIVINE LITURGY

The First Antiphon

Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth! Sing of His name, give glory to His praise!

(Ps. 65 [66]: 1)

Refrain: Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!

The voice of Thy thunder was in the whirlwind; Thy lightning lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook. *(Ps. 76 [77]: 18) Refrain.*

Thou art clothed with honor and majesty,

Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment. *(Ps. 103 [104]: 2) Refrain.*

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. *Refrain.*

The Second Antiphon

Mount Zion in the far north is the city of the great King. *(Ps. 47 [48]: 2)*

Refrain: O Son of God, transfigured on the mountain, save us who sing to Thee:
Alleluia!

And He brought them to the mountain of His sanctuary,
this mountain which His right hand had won. *(Ps. 77 [78]: 54) Refrain.*

The Mount Zion which He loved, He built as His sanctuary with mighty strength.
(Ps. 77 [78]: 68) Refrain.

The Third Antiphon

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved,
but abides forever. *(Ps. 124 [125]: 1) Troparion.*

As the mountains are round about it, so the Lord is round about His people,
from this time and forevermore. *(Ps. 124 [125]: 2) Troparion.*

O Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell on Thy holy mountain?
(Ps. 14 [15]: 1) Troparion.

Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place?
(Ps. 23 [24]: 3) Troparion.

Entrance Verse

Send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me,
let them bring me to Thy holy mountain. *(Ps. 42 [43]: 3) Troparion.*

The Prokeimenon

Reader: The Prokeimenon in the 4th Tone: O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In
wisdom hast Thou made them all. *(Ps 103 [104]: 24)*

All (choir): O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them
all.

Reader, verse: Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord, my God, Thou art very great!
(Ps 103 [104]: 1)

All (choir): O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them
all.

Reader: O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!

All (choir): In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

The Epistle

§ 65: 2 Peter 1: 10 - 19 *(Transfiguration)*

BRETHREN, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure
for if ye do these things ye shall not sin at any time:

for so an entrance shall be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth.

Yea, I think it is right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my body, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

Moreover I will be careful to ensure that ye always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were 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.

And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

The Alleluia

Reader: Alleluia in the 8th Tone.

All (choir): Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Reader, verse: The heavens are Thine; the earth also is Thine. (*Transfiguration*)
(Ps 88 [89]:11)

All (choir): Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Reader, verse: Blessed are the people who know the festal shout! (Ps 88 [89]:15a).

All (choir): Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

The Gospel

§ 70: Matthew 17: 1 - 9 (*Transfiguration*)

AT THAT TIME, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

² And was transfigured before them:

and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

³ And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

⁴ Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

⁵ While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

⁶ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

⁷ And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

⁸ And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying,
Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

Hymn to the Theotokos - Tone 4

Instead of "It is truly meet ..." we sing:

Magnify, O my soul, the Lord who was transfigured on Mount Tabor!

Thy birthgiving was incorruptible.

God came from thy body and appeared on earth in flesh,
dwelling among men.

Therefore we magnify thee, O Theotokos.

Communion Hymn

O Lord, we will walk in the light of Thy countenance, and will exult in Thy name
forever. (*Ps 88 [89]: 15b*) Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Vespers 1st reading *Exodus 24:12-18*

¹² The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." ¹³ So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. ¹⁴ To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them."

¹⁵ Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. ¹⁷ Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. ¹⁸ Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Vespers, 2nd reading *Composite 15 - Exodus 33:11-23; 34:4-6, 8*

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses, as if one should speak to his friend; and he returned to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, departed not from the Tabernacle. And Moses said to the Lord, "Behold, Thou didst command me to lead forth this people, but Thou hast not showed me whom Thou wilt send with me; but Thou hast said to me, 'I know you above all, and you have found favor with me.' If, then, I have found grace in Thy sight, reveal Thyself to me, that I may see Thee clearly, that I may find grace in Thy sight, and that I may know that this great nation is Thy people." And the Lord said unto him, "I Myself will go before you, and I will give you rest." And Moses said to Him, "If Thou Thyself dost not go with us, bring me not up

from here.

² “And how shall it be surely known that both I and Thy people have found grace with Thee, except Thou go with us? So both I and Thy people shall be glorified beyond all the nations, as many as are upon the earth.” And the Lord said to Moses, “This word also, which you have spoken, I will do; for you have found grace before Me, and I know you above all.” And Moses said, “Show me Thy glory.”

³ And the Lord said to Moses, I will go before you with My glory, and I will call out My name, ‘the Lord’ before you; and I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” And again He said, “You shall not be able to see My face, for man shall not see My face and live.” And again the Lord said, “Behold there is a place by Me; you shall stand upon the rock. And when My glory shall pass by, then I will put you in a cleft on the rock; and I will cover you with My hand, until I pass by. And I will take away My hand, and then you shall see My backside; but My face shall not appear to you.”

⁴ And having risen early in the morning, Moses went up Mount Sinai, as the Lord had told him. And the Lord descended in a cloud, and Moses stood there before Him and called out in the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before his face, and called out, “The Lord God, compassionate and merciful, longsuffering, greatly-merciful, and true.” And Moses, making haste, stooped down to the earth and worshipped the Lord.

Vespers, 3rd reading **Composite 23 - 3 [1] Kings 19:3-9, 11-13, 15, 16**

¹ In those days, Elijah went to Beersheba, in the land of Judah. And he left his servant there and went a days journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree. And he lay down and slept under the tree. And behold, someone touched him and said to him, “Arise, eat and drink.” And Elijah looked, and behold, at his head there was a cake of barley and a cruse of water. And he arose, and ate and drank, and lay down again and slept.

² And the angel of the Lord returned a second time, and touched him, and said to him, “Arise, eat and drink, for the journey will be too much for you.” And he arose, and ate and drank. And he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb.

³ And he entered there into a cave, and lodged there. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and the Lord said to him, “You shall go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountain, and broke in pieces the rock before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a voice of a gentle breeze, and the Lord was there. And it came to pass when Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his mantle and went out and stood before the cave.

⁴ And the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way, and you shall come on the way of the wilderness of Damascus; and you shall anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat to be prophet in your place."

Magnification

We magnify thee, O Christ, the Giver of life, and we honor the most glorious transfiguration of thy most pure flesh.

1. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God and in His holy mountain. *(Ps 47 [48]: 1)*
2. The Lord lifts up the meek, *(Ps 146 [147]:6)* He raises up the humble. *(see Ps. 74 [75]: 8b)*
3. Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place? *(Ps. 23 [24]: 3)*
4. O Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? *(Ps.14 [15]: 1a)*
5. Who shall dwell on Thy holy mountain? *(Ps.14 [15]: 1b)*
6. Send out Thy light and Thy truth. *(Ps 42 [43]: 3a)*
7. Thou dost shine wondrously from the everlasting mountains. *(Ps. 75 [76]: 5)*
8. The world and all that is in it, thou hast founded them. *(Ps 88 [89]: 12b)*
9. Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy Name. *(Ps 88 [89]: 13b)*
10. O Lord, we will walk in the light of Thy countenance. *(Ps 88 [89]: 15b)*
11. and will exult in Thy name forever. *(Ps 88 [89]: 16a)*
12. The world and all that is in it, thou hast founded them. *(Ps 88 [89]: 12b)*
13. Let the brightness of the Lord our God be upon us, *(Ps 89 [90]: 17a)*
from this time forth and for evermore. *(Ps 130 [131]:3b)*

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to thee, O God. *thrice*

Matins Prokeimenon

Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy Name. *(Ps 88 [89]: 13b) verse:* The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine. *(Ps 88 [89]: 12a)*

Matins Gospel

§ 45 Luke 9:28-36

AT THAT TIME, JESUS took Peter and John and James,
and went up into a mountain to pray.

²⁹ And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered,
and his raiment was white and glistening.

³⁰ And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:

³¹ Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease
which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

- ³² But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep:
and when they were awake,
they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.
- ³³ And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus,
Master, it is good for us to be here:
and let us make three tabernacles;
one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.
- ³⁴ While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them:
and they feared as they entered into the cloud.
- ³⁵ And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying,
This is my beloved Son: hear him.
- ³⁶ And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone.
And they kept it close,
and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

HYMNS

Aposticha - Tone 1

He who once spoke through symbols to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, 'I am He who is',¹ was transfigured today upon Mount Tabor before the disciples; and in His own person He showed them the nature of man, arrayed in the original beauty of the Image. Calling Moses and Elijah to be witnesses of this exceeding grace, He made them sharers in His joy, foretelling His decease² through the Cross and His saving Resurrection.

Post Gospel Stikheron - TONE 5

Having uncovered, O Saviour, a little of the light of Thy divinity to those who went up with Thee into the mountain, Thou hast made them lovers of Thy glory. Therefore they cried in awe: 'It is good for us to be here.' With them we also sing unto Thee, O Saviour Christ who wast transfigured.

Ikos of the Kontakion

Awake ye sluggards, lie not for ever on the ground; and ye thoughts that draw my soul towards the earth, arise and go up to the high slope of the divine ascent. Let us run to join Peter and the sons of Zebedee, and go with them to Mount Tabor, that with them we may see the glory of our God and hear the voice they heard from heaven; and they proclaimed that this is the Brightness of the Father.

Exapostilarion

Today on Tabor in the manifestation of Thy Light, O Word, Thou unaltered Light from the Light of the unbegotten Father, we have seen the Father as Light and the Spirit as Light, guiding with light the whole creation.

1 Exodus 3: 14.

2 Luke 9: 31.

From the Sermons of St Leo the Great of Rome

On the Transfiguration

The Lord takes chosen witnesses, and in their presence, reveals His glory. That form of body which He had in common with other men, He so transfigured with light, that His Face did shine as the sun, and His raiment became exceeding white as snow. Of this metamorphosis the chief work was to remove from the hearts of the disciples the stumbling at the Cross. Before their eyes was unveiled the splendor of His hidden majesty, that the lowliness of His freely-chosen suffering might not confound their faith.

But none the less was there here laid by the Providence of God a solid foundation for the hope of the Holy Church, whereby the whole body of Christ should know with what a change it is yet to be honored. **The members of that body whose Head hath already been transfigured in light may promise themselves a share in His glory.**

For the strengthening the Apostles and bringing them forward into all knowledge, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias that is, the Law and the Prophets talking with Him. Before five witnesses did His glorification take place, as though to fulfill that which is written: At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.³ What can be more certain, what can be better attested than this matter, which is proclaimed by the trumpets of both the Old and the New Testaments, and concerning which the witness of ancient testimony unites with the teaching of the Gospel. The pages of either Covenant strengthen one another, and the brightness of open glory makes manifest and distinct Him Whom the former prophecies had promised under the veil of mysteries.



³ Deut. 19:15.

The unveiling of such mysteries roused the mind of the Apostle Peter to an outburst of longing for the things eternal, which despised and disdained the things worldly and earthly overflowing with gladness at the vision, he yearned to dwell with Jesus there, where the revelation of His glory had rejoiced him. And so he said Master, it is good for us to be here if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. To this proposal the Lord answered nothing, this signifying, that what Peter wished was not wrong, but out of place, since the world could not be saved but by the death of Christ.

And the Lord's example was to call the faith of believers to this, that although it behooves us to have no doubts concerning the promise of eternal blessedness, yet we are to understand that, amid the trials of this life, we are to seek for endurance before glory.



Image of the Transfiguration from the Apsse of the Monastery Church at Mount Sinai.

St. John of the Ladder prayed and served before this mosaic.

Homily by Saint John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople

57th on Matthew

Since the Lord had spoken much concerning dangers, much concerning His Own sufferings, much concerning death, and the killing of His disciples, and had laid upon them many hard and grievous things, and since all these were in this present life, and already hanging over them, whereas the good things were matter for hope and waiting as, for example, that whosoever should lose his life for His sake should find it, for that the Son of Man should come in the glory of His Father, and reward every man

according to his works.⁴ Therefore, to assure them by their own eyes, and show them what the glory is wherein He will come, He manifested and unveiled it to them, as far as in this life they were able to grasp it, lest they and especially Peter should grieve over their own deaths, or the death of their Lord.

But although He speaks concerning both, He gives a glimpse of heaven only and not of hell. To see hell would have profited the brutish and stupid, but His disciples were upright and clear-sighted, and therefore for them it was enough to be strengthened by the better things. This was what suited Him the best. Yet He left not the other altogether undone. Sometimes He set the horrors of hell, as it were, before the eyes, as for instance in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and that of him who was fain to wring the hundred pence from his fellow-servant. But mark well Matthew's good will, in not concealing the names of those who were preferred. John also likewise often records the special praises of Peter with great truthfulness and care. For in this companionship of the Apostles, there was no envy, nor did vainglory find place. It was therefore the leaders of the Apostles whom Christ took apart from the others. And wherefore did he take these only? Because there were evidently superior to the rest. And why did he not do this straightway, and not until after six days? Evidently to spare the natural feelings of the other disciples; and for the same reason Christ did not for six days announce who were to go up.

The Transfiguration

by Father Alexander Schmemmann

Everlasting Light

Transfiguration! What a wonderful, beautiful and joyous word this is! It reverberates in soul and mind with such brightness and celebration! For centuries the Russian people loved this summer, August feast of the Lord's Transfiguration, when, in the words of Fedor Tiutchev, "it is as if the whole day becomes crystal-clear and radiant."

What is this feast about, what is its essence and the source of its joy and light? First, let's hear the gospel narrative of the event. Jesus, according to the account in St Matthew's gospel, took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And He was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three booths here" ... He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying,

⁴ Matth. 16:25, 27.

“Rise, and have no fear.” And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead.” (Mt 17: 1-9)

What does this gospel story mean? What place does this enigmatic revelation of glory have in the earthly life and work of Christ?

Few would disagree Christ’s image in the gospels is first and foremost an image of humility. Beginning with his birth, there was no room to be found in any of the homes



in the town, and so He was born outside, in a cave. And to the very end He was without a home, “having no place” - as He himself said - “to lay his head” (Mt 8:20). Those whom He healed and helped He commanded to tell no one. He shunned all honors and every opportunity for fame. And He voluntarily left the safety of Galilee, where there was no threat, and chose to return to Jerusalem, where what awaited him was suffering, the humiliation of a trial and judgment, and a painful, shameful execution. “Learn from me,” He said, “for I am meek and lowly of heart ...” (Mt 11: 29).

In this life of humility and self-renunciation, there were only a few occasions when the hidden rays of divine power and glory broke through. But, without exception, only a very few people witnessed these “glorifications,” and even they usually did not comprehend the significance of what they saw. This is how it was on the night of his birth, when simple shepherds heard the angels’ hymn of glory, the “tidings,” as the gospel says, “of great joy” (Lk 2: 10). This is how it was, already many years later, on the day Jesus came to accept baptism in the Jordan, when we hear that same voice from heaven and the same words heard at the Transfiguration: “This is my beloved Son ...” (Mt 3: 17). Finally, He is glorified here on the mountain, in the presence of the three disciples. And every time this mysterious heavenly glory is revealed, the glorification comes not from human beings, but from above, from heaven. The Church answers, and has always answered, the question about the meaning of Christ’s earthly glorification not with explanations but by celebrations - by celebration of that unique joy that marks the annual commemoration of the Transfiguration.

One word dominates this feast in all its prayers, hymns and readings. This word is light. “Let your everlasting light shine also upon us sinners.” The world is a dark, cold and terrifying place. And this darkness is not dispelled by the physical light of the sun. On the contrary, perhaps, the sun’s light makes human life seem even more

terrible and hopeless as life surges relentlessly and inexorably, bound by sufferings and loneliness, toward death and annihilation. All is condemned, all suffers, all is subject to the incomprehensible and merciless law of sin and death. But then comes the appearance on earth, the entrance into the world, of a man, humble and homeless, who has no authority at all over anyone, who has no earthly power whatsoever. And He tells people that this kingdom of darkness, evil and death is not our true life; that this is not the world God created; that evil and suffering and finally death itself can and must be conquered; and that He is sent by God, his own Father, to save people from this terrible bondage to sin and death. Human beings have forgotten their true nature and calling, renounced them. They must turn to see that they have lost the ability to see, to hear what they are already incapable of hearing. They must come to believe all over again that good is stronger than evil, love stronger than hate, life stronger than death. Christ heals, helps and gives himself to everyone. And nevertheless the people do not understand, do not hear, do not believe. He could have revealed his divine glory and power and forced them to believe in him. But He wants from them only freely-given faith, freely-given love, freely-given acceptance. He knows that in the hour of his ultimate sacrifice, ultimate self-giving, everyone will flee in fear and forsake him. But right now, so that afterwards, when everything is finished, the world would still have some evidence of where He is inviting people to come, what He is offering us as a gift, as life, as the fullness of meaning and joy; now, therefore, hidden from the world and from the people, He reveals to three of his own disciples that glory, that light, that victorious celebration to which man is called from eternity.



The divine light, permeating the entire world. The divine light, transfiguring man. The divine light in which everything acquires its ultimate and eternal meaning. "It is good for us to be here," cried the apostle Peter seeing this light and this glory. And from that time, Christianity, the Church, faith is one continuous, joyful repetition of this "it is good for us to be here." But faith is also a plea for the everlasting light, a

thirst for this illumination and transfiguration. This light continues to shine, through the darkness and evil, through the drab grayness and dull routine of this world, like a ray of sun piercing through the clouds. It is recognized by the soul, it comforts the heart, it makes us feel alive, and it transfigures us from within. "Lord! It is good for us to be here!" If only these words might become ours, if only they might become our soul's answer to the gift of divine light, if only our prayer might become the prayer for transfiguration, for the victory of light! "Let your everlasting light shine also upon us sinners!"

The Blessing of Fruit

It is an ancient custom in Orthodox churches to bless fruits and vegetables on the feast of Transfiguration. This prompts us to ask ourselves: what is the meaning of this ancient rite, and of blessing, sanctification in general, since the blessing of fruit on Transfiguration is only one of many such rites? If we open the liturgical service book where all these rites are collected, the so-called "Book of Needs," we find special services such as blessings for a new home, a field, a garden, a well. It is as if the Church addresses itself to the entire world, as if God's right hand of blessing were being extended over all through these rites of blessing and sanctification. Why have people from time immemorial felt the need for blessings?

We must say immediately that proponents of anti-religious propaganda unquestioningly regard all these rites as superstition which, in their view, is the whole content of religion. They argue that superstition is a product of fear: a person is afraid of being poisoned, afraid of a bad harvest, afraid that his house will burn down, afraid of other people. Religion purveys deliverance from fear: sprinkle the fruit or the garden or the home with holy water and God will protect both them and you. "So you see, it's all crude ignorance, superstition and ... deception." However, in presenting the issue this way, atheist propaganda does not mention any of the prayers or rites involved with these supposed superstitions. They make it sound as if priests, the clergy, are a cadre of swindlers who exploit fear and ignorance by using incomprehensible magical incantations. But if one actually listens to these prayers and looks closely at these rites, if only once in a lifetime one experiences the joy of that radiant and sunlit Transfiguration noonday blessing, then it becomes clear that the deception is not coming from the Church, but from ill-willed atheist propaganda. It is precisely this propaganda, and not the Church's prayer, which is permeated with fear, mistrust, and a need to denounce anything more elevated, more pure, more profound than its own simplistic, mundane, and materialistic approach to the world and to life. For what we see and hear and experience above all in these rites and prayers is joy and thanksgiving. But if fear were present, there could be no joy and no thanksgiving; and conversely, if joy is present, there can be no fear. Fear produces misery and mistrust, but there is none of this in transfiguration's light. But what is the source of

this joy and thanksgiving?

One of Osip Mandelshtam's poems, devoted to the eucharistic liturgy, the main service of Christian worship, includes this wonderful verse: "Take into your hands the whole world, as if it were a simple apple ..." Perhaps here, because it is so simple and childlike, we see better than anywhere else the source of joy and thanksgiving that permeate Christian faith. In an apple, and in everything within the world, faith sees, recognizes, and accepts God's gift, filled with love, beauty and wisdom. Faith hears the apple and the world speaking of that boundless love that created the world and life and gave them to us.

The Transfiguration of Christ

by Archbishop Dmitri (Royster) of Dallas & the South

The Transfiguration of Christ is recorded in the first three Gospels (Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9: 2-9; Luke 9: 28-36). The fourth does not contain an account of the event, but its author, being one of the three witnesses, is probably referring specifically to it when he says: *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* (1:14). The holy Apostle Peter also recalls his (as well as James' and John's) presence with the Lord on Mt. Tabor: *(we) were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount* (II Peter 1:16-18).

All three Gospel accounts agree in the details of the event as well as its following the rather crucial conversation between Jesus and the disciples on the road to Caesarea of Philippi. The Lord seems to have wanted to get certain matters of great importance clear in the minds of His followers before He entered into His priestly ministry. 1) In answer to His question, *Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?* we have Peter's confession: *Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God* (Matthew 16:16), or *thou art the Christ* (Mark 8:29), or *the Christ of God* (Luke 9:20); 2) Jesus then foretells His suffering, death and resurrection; 3) He rebukes Peter for his objection that such things could not happen to Him; 4) He exhorts them to bear the cross if they would be true disciples; and 5) He promises that some of those standing there would not taste of death *till they have seen the Son of Man coming in His kingdom* (Matthew 16:28), or *till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power* (Mark 9:1), or *till they see the kingdom of God* (Luke 9:27).

The narration of the Transfiguration on the mountain comes immediately after the description of the conversation *after six days*, although Luke says: *about eight days after* (both expressions were commonly used for "a week later"): Jesus' acceptance of the

name of Christ or Son of God, His final great prophecy, His reminder of what the life in Him will consist of, and His promise concerning the kingdom. These things, then, must be understood as linked to the Transfiguration itself and as a preparation of the disciples for it.

After having declared that Peter's confession was revealed to him by the heavenly Father (Matthew 16:17), and then having predicted His Passion and Resurrection, the Lord leads the three, (Peter, James and John) to a "high mountain" where His eternal glory is revealed. Thus, the disciples could understand that the suffering and death



that He was to undergo was voluntary. "Thou disciples, insofar as they could bear it, beheld thy glory, O Christ our God; so that, when they saw thee crucified, they might remember that thy suffering was voluntary, and could declare to all the world that thou art truly the effulgent Splendor of the Father."

(Kontakion of the Feast)

However, the instruction of the disciples was only one of the purposes of this manifestation.

It is possible to understand the Lord's promise "that there were some standing there that would not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom," as being fulfilled precisely in the Transfiguration. In other words, seeing Jesus the Man already glorified, as He will be after the resurrection, and their being able to see Him in His eternal glory, is nothing more than their seeing the Kingdom of

God. Jesus' glorification as the Son of Man, He was yet to pray for just before the crucifixion (John 17:4). This then would be a vision of that glorification by anticipation. Yet, all of God's acts, His divine counsel, accomplished in the time of this world, are

already accomplished timelessly, eternally by Him for whom there is no time. In the dazzling light, in which the very mountain and all the surroundings were altered, there is a glimpse of the transfigured world (cosmos), when God will be all in all, when the Kingdom is finally established.

The initial presence of Moses and Elias, to whom God had revealed his glory, testifies to the continuity of the mighty work of God and to the fact that the Son participated in those Old Covenant revelations. Moses and Elias then disappear and the uniqueness of Jesus, who had apparently been more or less equal to them in the eyes of the disciples, is now evident. Further, we hear the voice of the Father that came out of the cloud: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him* (Matthew 17:5). This voice was the Father's response to Peter's enthusiastic suggestion that they make three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elias.

The disciples fell on their faces, for they could not bear, as created beings, the vision of glory. Only when Jesus touched them and told them to arise and not be afraid, were they able to return to the reality they knew. Our own credal statement, "Light of Light," with reference to the Son is testimony to our faith that God is light and that the Son is also light, and is related to this vision as the eternal, uncreated light on Mt. Tabor.

The same declaration of the Father concerning Christ's eternal Sonship had been heard at the very beginning of His public work, at His baptism. It was at that time that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him (Luke 3:22), and He began His prophetic ministry, that is, His mission to preach the Kingdom of God and to declare the will of God for mankind. Now, when this voice is heard a second time, a cloud overshadows Him (the cloud was frequently the image of God's glory and the symbol of the Holy Spirit's descent in the Old Testament - Exodus 19:9; Leviticus 16:2; II Chronicles 5:13, etc.). It is then, at this point, that the prophetic ministry gives way to Christ's priestly ministry. The Transfiguration is not only another revelation of the Holy Trinity, but also another anointing for Christ's work, this time for the sacrifice, in which Jesus would be not only the priest who sacrifices, but the victim who is sacrificed.

"O thou who before the ages art God the Word, O thou who art clothed with light as with a garment, thou wast transfigured before thy disciples, O Master, and didst shine forth more radiantly than the sun. Verily, Moses and Elias did stand before thee, clearly showing that thou art the Lord of the quick and the dead, glorifying thine ineffable providence, thy mercy, and thy great condescension wherewith thou didst save the lost." (Prosomion on the Praises, Matins of the Feast)