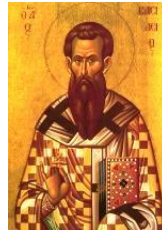


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THE TRANSFIGURATION

TOWARDS THE END of Jesus' public ministry, He began preparing His disciples for His approaching death and resurrection. In *Mt 16* this scene concludes with the following prophecy: "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (v. 28). This is immediately followed by a fulfillment of this prophecy: the holy transfiguration of Christ. As St Gregory Palamas says in his homily on this feast, "It is the light of His own forthcoming transfiguration which He terms the Glory of His Father and of His Kingdom."

At Christ's transfiguration "some standing here" – Peter, James and John – witnessed the Lord in the glory of His kingdom, if only for a moment. He was not changed – they were. They were able to see what is always there but which they could not imagine before: that God dwelt in man.

St Gregory Palamas describes it this way: "Christ was transfigured, not by the addition of something He was not, nor by a transformation into something He was not, but by the manifestation to His disciples of what He really was. He opened their eyes so that instead of being blind they could see. While He Himself remained the same, they could now see Him as other than He had appeared to them formerly. For He is 'the true light' (*Jn 1:9*), the beauty of divine glory, and He shone forth like the sun." As St Ephrem the Syrian expressed it, "They saw two suns; one in the sky, as usual, and one unusually; one visible in the firmament and lighting the world, and one, His face, visible to them alone" (*Sermon on the Transfiguration*, 8). In one sense we can say that Christ was not transfigured; it was the Apostles' ability to see Him which was transfigured.

"What He Really Was": For a moment Christ was revealed to the disciples as what He really was: God incarnate in our human flesh. "We believe that at the transfiguration He manifested not some other sort of light, but only that which was concealed beneath His fleshly exterior. This Light was the Light of the Divine Nature, and as such, it was Uncreated and Divine" (St Gregory Palamas, *Homily on the Transfiguration*).

This Light was manifested to the disciples in the radiance of His face and garments: "His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (*Mt 17:2*). As Mark describes it, "His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them" (*Mk 9:3*). The immaterial divine nature of the Son of God is manifested in the physical sign of a shining face and garments because this was all that the Disciples could absorb. As we sing in the troparion of this feast, Christ was "showing Your disciples as much of Your glory as they could behold."

Over succeeding centuries, the Church deepened its understanding of the Incarnation, but not without disagreement. It took several hundred years and several Ecumenical Councils for the Church to articulate its faith in Christ as the incarnate Word of God. By the fourth century the Church was calling Christ "Light from Light, true God from true God... of one essence with the Father" but it took several more centuries and councils to grasp the implications of that statement.

As iconography developed it settled on one particular form to represent the divine nature of the light perceived by the Disciples. The *mandorla* is a design made up of overlapping geometrical shapes which surrounds the image of Christ in icons of the transfiguration. The basic mandorla – an Italian word meaning *almond* – contains three round or oval concentric circles, in shades of blue or gold, representing the Trinity. The innermost circle is of the deepest shade representing the unseen Father. Other geometrical shapes represent the energy of the divine light shining upon the Disciples. The mandorla is generally used in icons representing the glorified Christ at His transfiguration and resurrection and when receiving His Mother at her dormition.

What We Are Meant to Become: In the mystery of Christ's transfiguration the Church has caught a glimpse of what those who are in Christ are meant to be: persons who in their humanity can have God dwelling in them, reflecting that presence as light. The Lord Himself tells us that at His second coming "the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (*Mt 1:43*). The custom of depicting saints and angels with haloes derives from this prophetic statement of Christ.

(August 2021 Leaflet)

SUNDAY 10th AFTER PENTECOST Saturday, July 31 & Sunday, August 1, 2021

PARISH SERVICES

Holy Liturgy: Saturday 4:30PM, Sunday 11:00AM

Holy Rosary: Sunday 10:30AM

HEALING PRAYERS NEEDED

Prayers needed for our friends Nazmie Barahmeh, Jean Benoit, Nadia Casab, Nancy Gazzal, Daniel Klockowski, Jean Murad, Rose Pawlinga, John Roth, Brian Sagrestano, and Karen Zalatan. Please notify Fr. Shofany in case of illness.

RECENT RECEIPTS

Weekly Collection July 24/25: \$ 667.00

Memorial Services: \$ 690.00

† MEMORIAL MASSES †

THIS SATURDAY, JULY 31

† Julia Nassimos, By Tom & Juan Thomas

† John Gazzal, By George & Penny Kunkel

† Dr. John Kakaty, By David & Janet George & family

† Jeanette Farewege, By Merched and Christina Sabbagh and children

† Doris Zalatan, 34th Memorial Anniversary, By Michelle Roth

THIS SUNDAY, AUGUST 1

† Julia Nassimos, By Tom & Juan Thomas

† John Gazzal, By Renee Kawam & Daughters

† Dr. John Kakaty, By Barrie Czerkies

† Jeanette Farewege, By Fadi and Dana Sabbagh and children

† Archbishop George El Murr, By Wael & Olga Barahmeh

NEXT SATURDAY, AUGUST 7

† Julia Nassimos, By Tom & Juan Thomas

† John Gazzal, By George & Penny Kunkel

† Dr. John Kakaty, By Mary Nassimos

† Jeanette Farewege, By Basel and Melissa Sabbagh and children

NEXT SUNDAY, AUGUST 8

† Julia Nassimos, By Tom & Juan Thomas

† John Gazzal, By John & Michelle Roth

† Dr. John Kakaty, By Robert & Laura Zaloom

† Jeanette Farewege, By Don & Joyce Fedor