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# Christ’s Transfiguration and our Own




By Archimandrite Iakovos Kanakis

Yesterday and today we have a great feast of the Lord, the Transfiguration of Christ the Saviour. We shall say a few words about the feast, based on what the Gospel tells us. Not long before His crucifixion, Christ took three of His disciples, Peter, James and John, led them up onto a high mountain called Tabor and was transfigured before their eyes. His face became as bright as the sun and His clothes shone white. On His left and right appeared two figures from the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah, who represented the Law and the Prophets respectively. The disciples were unable to bear the light and fell to the ground (Pentecost had not yet happened). One of them, Peter, asked Christ if they could set up tents and stay there. Then a cloud of light engulfed them and a voice was heard from the heavens- the same as had been heard at Theophany- saying: ‘This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him’. When the disciples fell to the ground in fear, Jesus said to them ‘Get up and don’t be afraid’. When they then opened their eyes, they saw no-one except Christ. As the came down from the mountain, Jesus instructed them not to tell anybody anything until He’d risen.

That, in brief, describes the event of the Transfiguration, but this great feast isn’t merely a historical event which happened once and now no longer concerns us. On

the contrary, it’s very much of concern to us all, and has been since the time of Christ…

The first thing to note is why Christ went high up on a mountain in order to be transfigured. Could this not have happened on a plain somewhere?

If you look at Bible history, almost all the great events took place high up. Moses receiving the law and so on. Even more generally, it seems that even idolaters and pagans had events which took place high up. They would also go up to peaks, to high places, to perform their sacrifices. So it would seem to be some sort of general tradition that great events took place in elevated locations.

Another thing is a reference from Saint Nikodimos the Athonite, a great theologian and saint of the church, concerning the Lord’s choice of three disciples to experience His Transfiguration. Saint Nikodimos says that it was because these three were better prepared for the event. The Lord was and is able to look into hearts and recognize their intentions and spirituality. He even knew in advance who would betray Him…

Allow me to make another point. The Transfiguration tells us who Christ is. Now why was He transfigured shortly before the crucifixion? Because He wanted to show his disciples that He is God. He demonstrated His divinity with the light which shone from His countenance and His garments. In this way, through this feast, the Church is able to formulate the dogma that Christ is perfect God and perfect human. This is the answer to those who cast doubt on either His divinity or His humanity. Because there are some who claim that Christ was a great person and taught wonderful things. The Transfiguration, however, makes it clear that He wasn’t merely a good person; He was also perfect God.

So the transfiguration tells us who Christ is and who we are as people. It tells us about our path forward as human beings. It’s an answer regarding what we should be doing on this earth where we’ve come and where we exist. On this earth which we tread, we have to choose the way which leads to the Light. This is the experience of the Transfiguration: a progression and an effort to enter the Light and to become one with it.

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