

07/08/2023

Homily by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the Great Vespers of the Transfiguration Feast



Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

We have gathered this evening to celebrate your parish's feast day - the Transfiguration of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This remarkable event in the life of our Lord occurred at the summit of Mount Tabor, which is in the Plain of Galilee. The Three Gospels that record this miraculous event happened in the presence of the Lord's inner circle: Peter and the brothers, Iakovos and John. And in witnessing this miraculous event, they also experienced the presence of the Prophets Moses and Elias.

There, on Mount Tabor, our Lord revealed the fullness of His Divinity and the purpose of His Humanity. He was utterly suffused with Divine Light, such that the Disciples could not even look upon him. But it was His earthly Tabernacle that was radiating light like the sun. He was not a mere vision, but the fullness of Human Nature exploding with the bright goodness of God. Thus, the Lord demonstrated to those Three Disciples, and to all who would follow Him, that this is our calling as well, to be vessels of God's light in the world.

For He did say to us:

"You are the Light of the world!"* as well as;

May your light so shine before people, that they may see your good deeds, and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven. †

But do we perceive ourselves as being capable of shining with that light? So often, we are overcome by our self-perceived inadequacies and incapacities that we miss the opportunities to be that light for the world. But just as a single candle can take away the darkness, it is in our small actions that we manifest God's light. If you wish to see this light, to feel this light in your heart, you have the ability to fulfill that wish.

Show love to those who you do not think deserve it.

Show forgiveness to those who do not want it.

Show compassion on those who suffer and are in need.

Believe me, your life will light up with joy, with peace, with a happiness of heart that no one and nothing can ever take away.

When the Disciples witnessed the light of the Lord, they did not know what to do, or even what to say. Finally, Peter said:

"Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles; one for You, one for Moses and one for Elias."‡

But the Evangelist adds this remark:

In fact, Peter did not know what he was saying, for they were all terrified. §

They were confused by fear of what they did not understand. Think of it like this – if suddenly, you could see the entire spectrum of light, of which we only see a small

fraction, we would be utterly overwhelmed. In that moment, they could not comprehend that the Lord's Transfiguration is a model for us. Instead, Peter wanted to capture the moment – so to speak – and encase the Lord and the two Prophets, Moses and Elias, in something that he thought he could control. He wanted to contain the uncontainable God!

And this is something that we tend to do sometimes as well, my friends. We see our local parishes and the churches in which we worship as boxes that should have just the right people and elements of which we approve. You could stand at the Pangari service after service, and think that you are counting the candles, but the Light of the World might escape your notice. This has always been true, for we see it on Tabor in Peter's desire to encapsulate the reality of God in a way that doesn't threaten him. Remember, they were afraid.

My dear Christians, that is why we strive to illumine our own lives and those around us with as much goodness, love and hope that we can muster. Because this is the Light that holds dominion in our lives, and allows us to light up the world in ways that cannot necessarily be seen in the visible spectrum.

In the Beginning the first words of God were: "Let there be light." ** And He created much more light than we can see with our physical eyes. May we be blessed to live our lives, illumined by the light of love, in order to be the light of the world, that we are called to be. Amen.

* Matthew 5:14.

† Matthew 5:16.

‡ Mark 9:5.

§ Mark 9:6.

* Genesis 1:3.

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