

Life Transfigured by God

Feast of the Transfiguration

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What exactly did the disciples see today as Jesus's face shines like the sun, and his garments become white as light? The disciples see the glory of God, His divinity, that is hidden behind the face of a poor humble preacher. The disciples record the story of the Transfiguration because the event reveals that the face of Jesus *is* the face of God. And the glory of Our Lord is the Glory of God. The glory of God often appeared to the Hebrew people. God's presence comes with light, and fire, and an overshadowing cloud again and again in the Old Testament. So too, in the Transfiguration, Jesus's face shines like the sun, his clothes become white as light, and a bright cloud overshadows His disciples.

Every Sunday, in the Nicene Creed, we profess that Jesus is "God from God, light from light, true God from true God", and that He is "of one essence with the Father." We believe that Jesus is of the same substance or essence as God the Father. And that the Light of Christ is the Light of God. St. John the evangelist says, "we have beheld his glory." He means that we have seen the glory of God the Father in the face of Jesus and that Jesus and the Father are One God. St. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us the story of the Transfiguration, where "a bright cloud overshadows the disciples," they are saying that Jesus is the God who appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai. Today, the disciples see the glory of God in Jesus. And may we too see Our Lord Transfigured.

Now, the word "overshadow" is used in today's Gospel. "Overshadow," appears only EIGHT times in scripture, THREE of them are in the Transfiguration stories. The Gospels say that the disciples saw "a bright cloud [that]

overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." In the gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel announces to Mary: the "Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will *overshadow* you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." In the Annunciation God is made man. God has appeared to us. In the Transfiguration, God announces His will: "listen to Him". What is our response? We must listen to Him in word and deed. We must live transfigured lives.

In our icons, you can see thin white lines scattered throughout the image of a saint, in hair, skin, clothes, even throughout the land and buildings in the background. These highlights show that the saints and the world around them are transfigured. Saints are not only bright as light in the afterlife, but they shine while they live in this world. Icons are not photos of natural reality, but images of the deeper unseen spiritual reality. Saints reflect the light of God. Light shines through their lives of love, obedience, prayer, and discipline. The light is God's light and God's presence, which transfigures their hearts and souls. God's light fills their bodies and their clothing. In the book of Exodus, Moses's "face shines because he had been *talking* with God."

And we too can be filled with the presence of God. The Holy Spirit can overshadow us. We too can be transfigured and illumined and shine brightly before others. Our hearts and minds can *talk* with God through prayer and reading Scripture, while our bodies are nourished by the Eucharist and struggle against sin and spiritual laziness through self-discipline.

We remember each time we come to Church that God is among us. He is in the world. By being in the world, God transfigures the world. And that is our mission as a church, as the Body of Christ, to be a light to the world, to transfigure the world around us. When we pray, and repent, and love, we

shine like the righteous, who shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. So, let us think good thoughts, reject bad thoughts, and let us love and think of others first. And maybe, through us, God will make His glory known, and His presence felt. Amen.