

He is the glorified God on the mountain



Introduction

- The Church celebrates the feast of the Transfiguration annually (13th of Mesra/ 19th August)
- It is considered one of the Lord's minor feasts
- The events of Transfiguration are mentioned in detail in the three synoptic gospels
 - Matthew
 - Mark
 - Luke
- The gospel of John refers to it indirectly

Summary of the transfiguration

- Video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oB9OqLWfW44>

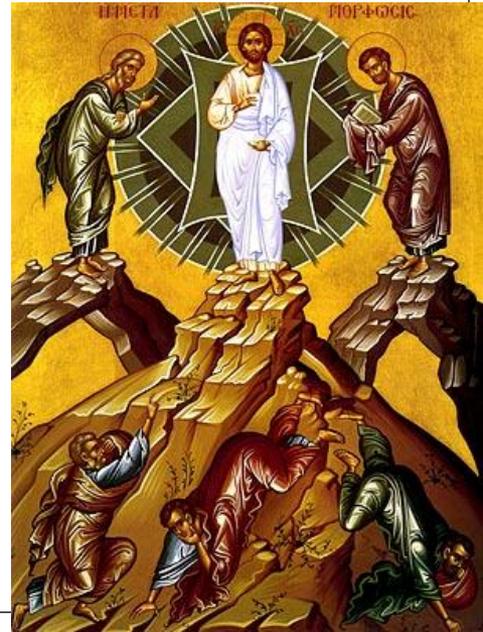
Summary of the Transfiguration

- **Matthew 17:1-9**

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking to Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

Summary of the Transfiguration

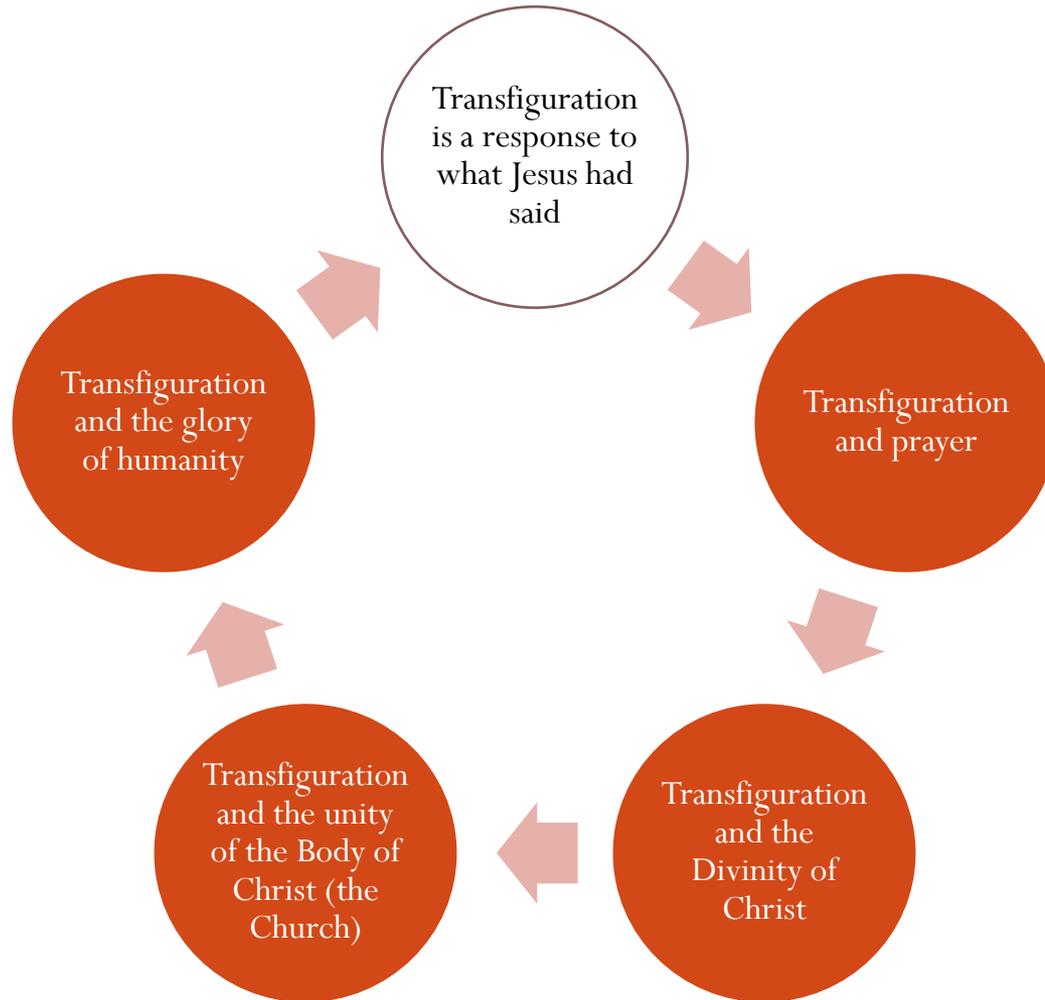
- “And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead”.



- Saint John Chrysostom comments on the difference of the timing of the transfiguration event between Saint Matthew and Saint Mark's gospels (Six Days) and that of Saint Luke's (eight days). He deduced the following : Saint Luke recorded the day of the speech and the day of transfiguration , whereas both Saint Mathew and Saint Mark recorded only the time between the events.



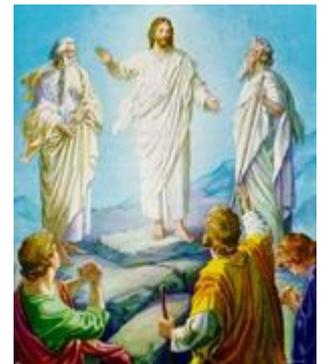
Why is the Transfiguration Significant?



Why is the Transfiguration Significant?

- **Transfiguration is a response to what Jesus had said**
- He mentioned 3 points in his speech to the disciples:
 1. “That he has to go to Jerusalem, suffer, be killed and on the third day resurrect.” (Matt 16:21)

The disciples did not accept that the messiah would be nailed to the cross. They expected a king of israel, an heir of King David who would destroy the Roman rulers. The Transfiguration was able to open their eyes to the glory of the crucified Jesus Christ, as well as the glory of followers in heaven: Moses + Elijah



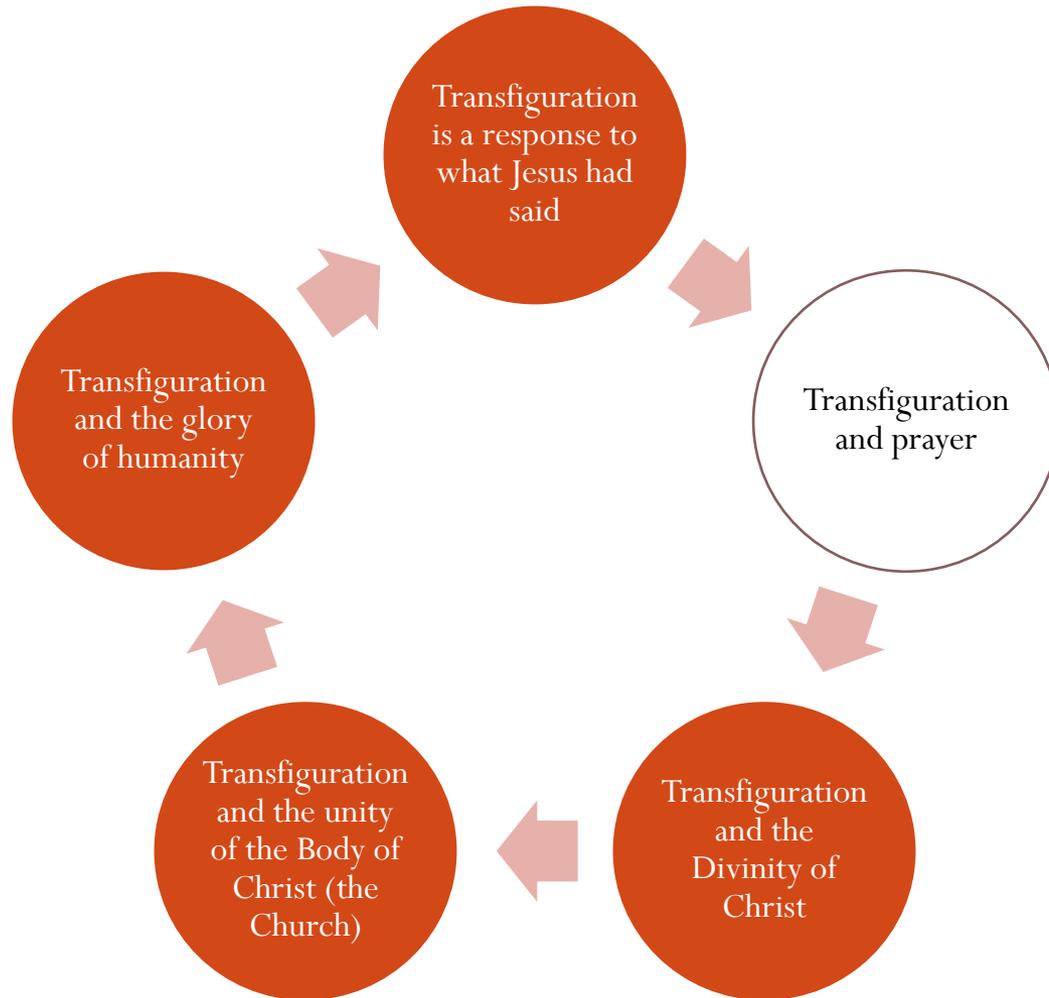
2. “Jesus will come back in His glory and the glory of His Father with all the angels and reward each one according to his deeds.” (Matt 16:27)

It was not clear to the disciples that Jesus (the son) and the Father have the same glory. They knew how simple the life of Jesus was and of his humility, but the transfiguration was the ultimate answer for the disciples who could not understand the real glory of the Son of Man.

3. “And he said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.” (Mark 9:1 / Luke 9:27)

The Lord wanted to show them a glimpse of the real glory of the kingdom, which they would strive, spread, fight, and die for. Transfiguration was the answer for them and for every one of us whose goal is Heaven.

Why is the Transfiguration Significant?



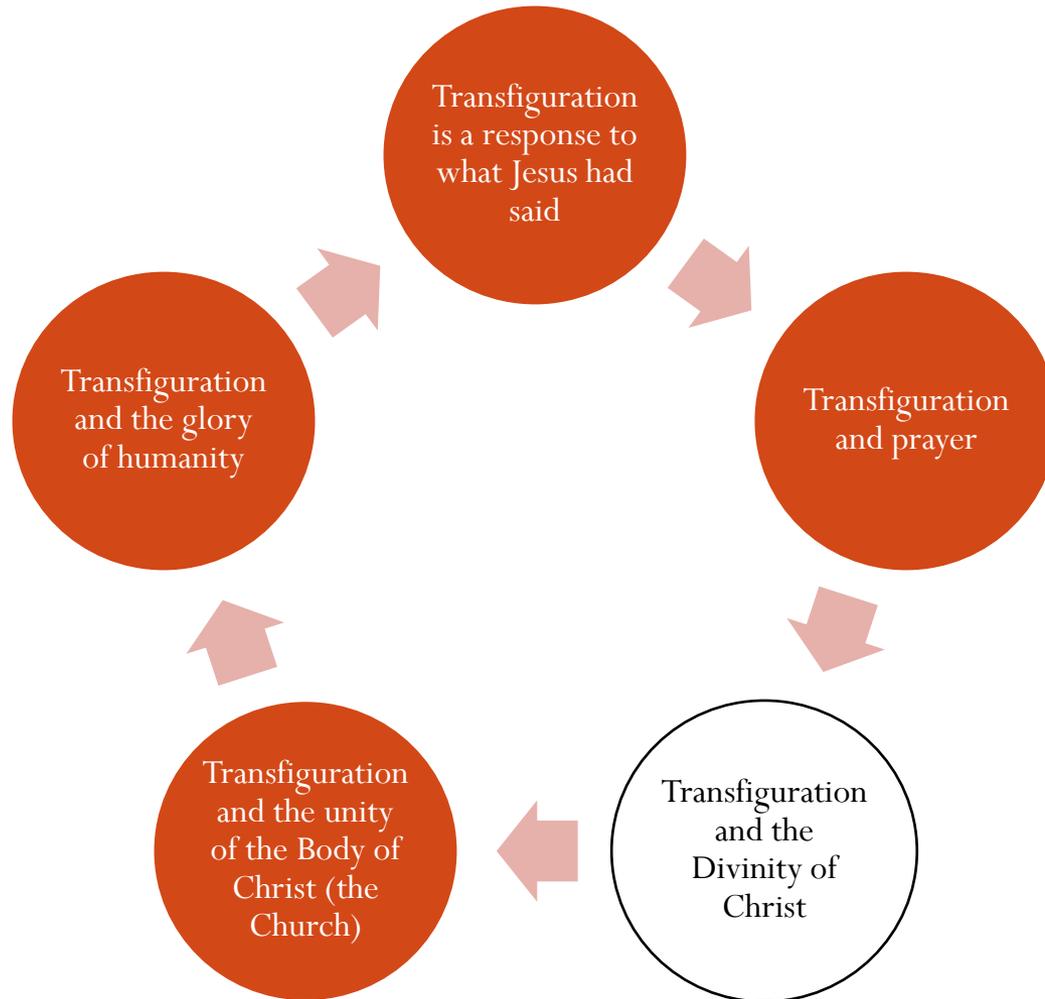


- **Transfiguration and Prayer**

- Transfiguration is the fruit of genuine prayer
- The only way to attain transfiguration is by prayer. The Lord will then guide us, with Him, to climb the high mountain, where we see and taste His Glory. The declaration of heaven, to the believers, through all the generations is either a new feature or recurrence of the transfiguration.
- Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is our true example in prayer, where He spent most of the nights in prayers to the Father.
- Even when the three disciples went with Him on the mountain, they could not persevere but slept and missed the major part of this glorious transfiguration. There was no doubt that a part of our Lord's Prayer was for 'the sleeping disciples' to wake up and witness the transfiguration before it was too late.

- Prayers free the believer from his worldly ties and bonds of darkness and raise him with his beloved Christ on the mountain, to live in the glory of our Lord -and have communion with the Saints and heavenly creatures.
- The prayer on the mountain, with our Lord Jesus Christ, is an extraordinary type of prayer, as it is that type which engulfs the heart with the love of God and the fire of the Spirit. It is the prayer which “*the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*” (Romans 8:26)
- Prayer is a virtue that is given to us through continuous practice, guidance and good example- more importantly, through persistence and continuous begging.
- Our Lord will never send us empty-handed, when we follow Him to the mountain, and beg Him with a broken and contrite heart. This does not apply only to beginners who struggle in the spiritual path but more essentially for the spiritually mature in the way .

Why is the Transfiguration Significant?



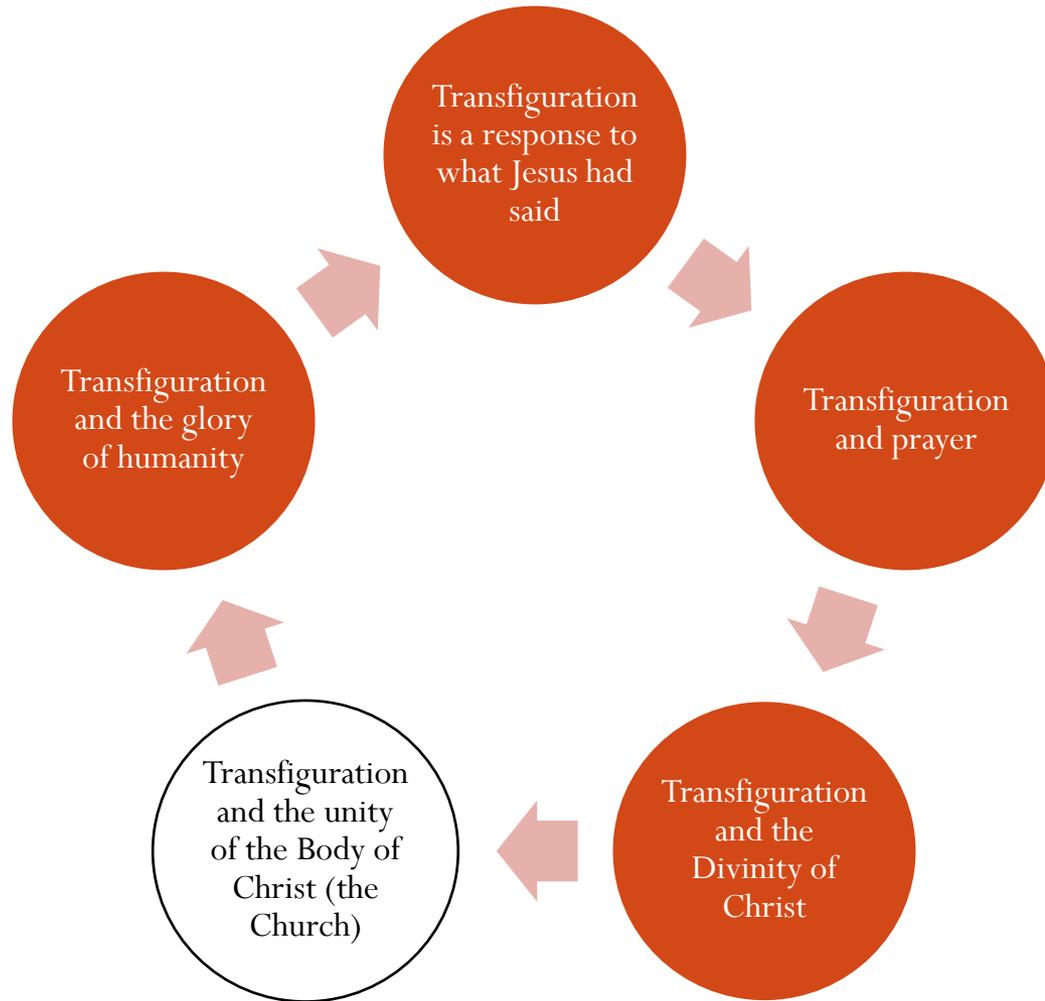


- **Transfiguration and the Divinity of Christ**

- Jesus' incarnation was marked with great humility and meekness that covered the glory of His divinity. So, He was identified as “...*He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him....., A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. ...*” (Isaiah 53:2-3)
- But the other image of the glory of His Divinity appeared on the mountain of Tabor. His face was shining as He is the true Light (John 8:12) . The light emitted from Him as He is ‘light out of Light’ (The Creed)· His clothes could not sustain the light so it “....*became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.*”(Mark 9:3)

- Jesus, the Son of God, is able to call the soul of Moses, from Hades; and the soul and body of Elijah (from a place we do not know) to meet Him on the mountain. As He is the Almighty God, He is able to eliminate the penalty of Moses “ *....though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel*” (Deuteronomy 32:51-52) and allow him entry to the promised land .
- On the mountain, a cloud descended and overshadowed them and the disciples, for the first time, heard the voice of the Father saying “*.....This is My beloved Son. Hear Him*”(Mark 9:7)
- **Our Lord Jesus Christ transfigured on two other occasions:** during His Resurrection and ascension to the heavens. The next great transfiguration will be on His Second Coming

Why is the Transfiguration Significant?



- **Transfiguration and the unity of the Body of Christ (The Church)**

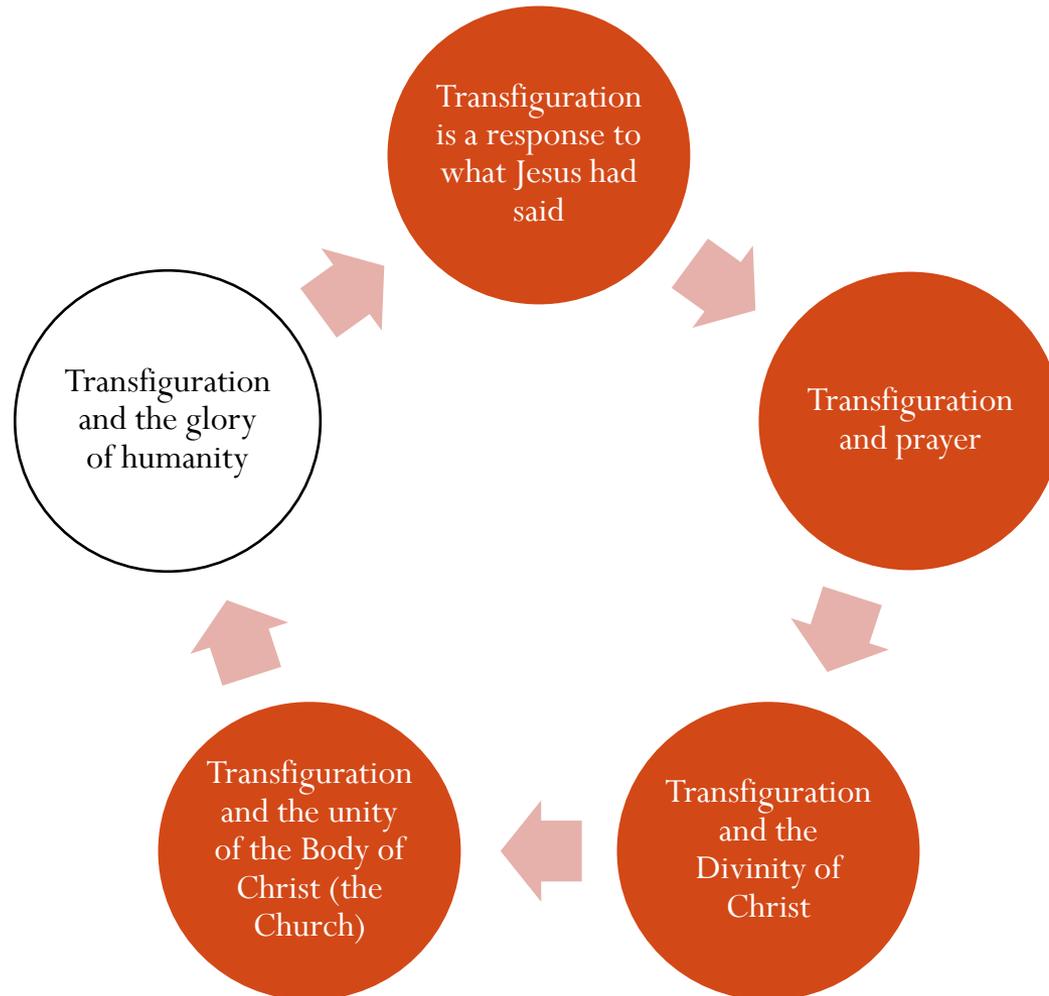
- On the mountain, our Lord chose three members from the struggling church on earth, and two from the departed members of the victorious church. Thus, showing us a unique example of the Body of Christ, which united the two groups, with Jesus Christ the Head.
- The perfect icon of the church is found on the mountain, where the glory of God shields everyone. The Son of God, shares, with the members of His Body, the plan of His unlimited sacrifice.
- This perfect icon is experienced when the believers gather around the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in every Eucharistic Liturgy.

- We will be purified from our sins, abide in our Saviour, receive renewal of our lives (John 6:55-57) and accept the mission to witness the Gospel of Salvation
- Saint Luke, in his account of the events on the mountain, gives us a glimpse of the topic of discussion, between our Lord, Moses and Elijah.
- The disciples did not share in this manifestation because they slept. How wonderful would it have been had they been alert and shared with Jesus and His heavenly guests in His conversation .
- Our Lord would have liked to share with his beloved children what he was about to do.

- On the same basis, our Lord would love His Church to share with Him the spreading of the kingdom of heaven on earth.
- He yearns for the repentance of all sinners, the strength to the crippled in faith, the healing of the sick



Why is the Transfiguration Significant?



- **Transfiguration and the glory of Humanity**
 - Moses and Elijah appeared on the mountain “*in glory*”
(*Luke 9:31*)
 - The reflection of the glory of our Master is obvious on the faces of His followers
 - In His intercession in prayer Jesus Christ reports to the Father saying: “*And the glory which You gave Me I have given them..*”(John 17:22). The Son granted His followers the Glory He shares with His Father.
 - In the twentieth century for example, the glory of our Lord Jesus was obvious on people like: Habib Guirguis , Pope Kyrellos, Fr. Michael Ibrahim and Fr. Bishoy Kamel just to mention a few

Witnesses of Transfiguration

- On the mountain of Tabor, there were 5 witnesses:
 - Three disciples from the New Testament
 - Two prophets from the Old Testament
- Peter, James and John represented the inner circle of the twelve. They attended with the Lord many special occasions such as raising Jarius' daughter, praying with Jesus in Gethsemane.



Witnesses of Transfiguration

- **3 Disciples (Peter, James, John)**
 - **St Peter** was the elder disciple, who was full of zeal, who confessed (through the revelation of the Father) that Jesus was the son of God. (Matt 16:16-17). He was the outspoken disciple, who would witness boldly for the name of Jesus, and would be counted as a pillar of the church (Galatians 2:9)
 - **St James**, the brother of St John, were very zealous among the 12 disciples and the Lord gave them “...*the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder...*” (Mark 3:17). He was also the first to be martyred from the 12 disciples.
 - **St John** was the beloved disciple full of great love to Jesus. He is the only disciple who followed the Lord to the Cross, and was given St Mary as his mother (John 19:27). He also believed in the resurrection before seeing the Lord (John 20:8)

Witnesses of Transfiguration

- **2 Prophets (Moses + Elijah)**

- They had 8 things in common:

1. Both fasted 40 days + 40 nights. Moses on the mountain to receive the 10 commandments, and Elijah when he went to meet the Lord in Horeb, the mountain of God.
2. Both had the courage to rebuke the defiant kings in their era. Moses Rebuked pharaoh, while Elijah stood against King Ahab.
3. Both accomplished their mission successfully. Moses freed the Israelites and led them for 40 years in the wilderness; Elijah demolished the altar of Baal, killed its 400 prophets and led the people to confess and follow God
4. Both were equipped with great power to perform miracles and wondrous to accomplish their missions.

Witnesses of Transfiguration

- 8 things in common (Cont'd):
 5. Both suffered for the sake of the Lord and for their mission. Moses suffered from Pharaoh as well as his own people. Elijah suffered from King Ahab and Isabel the queen, who vowed to kill him.
 6. Both suffered fear in one stage of their lives. Moses in the beginning of his life fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian. Elijah also fled from Queen Jezebel.
 7. Both had great faith in God and in their mission. Elijah's faith was obvious when he stopped the rain and when he raised the son of the widow.
 8. Both saw a glimpse of the Lord God. Moses upon his request (Exodus 33:18-23) he saw him only from his back. Whereas, Elijah when he was exhausted and in great despair, the Lord God passed by him and talked and comforted him (1 Kings 19:9-13)

Witnesses of Transfiguration

- **5 things they didn't have in common:**

1. Moses represents the married people (2 wives); whereas Elijah represents the virgins, as he was celibate.
2. Moses represents the dead; as he died and the Lord buried him in a valley in the land of Moab (Deut 34:5-6). Elijah represents the living as he "...went up by a whirlwind to heaven in a chariot of fire." (2 Kings 2:11).
3. Moses represents the people, living in the world, as he led his people for 40 years in the wilderness. Elijah represents the ascetics who live very harsh life without a permanent place to live in.
4. Moses represents the Law as he received it from the Lord, but Elijah represents the prophets; as he was the leader of the prophets in his time.

Witnesses of Transfiguration

- **5 things they didn't have in common: (Cont'd)**

5. Moses represents the humble people as his heart was full of endless love to his people. He interceded many times for the Israelites and turned away the Lord's severe wrath. Elijah represents the 'fiery persons' who executed 400 prophets of Baal in once occasion; and asked for fire to consume the captain and his 50 soldiers and stopped the water on the land for 3 years.

Conclusion: what can we learn?

- Through the transfiguration, the Lord emphasised the following facts for his church:
 1. He grants his people to be glorified with Him and in Him either here on earth or in Heaven.
 2. He “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21) in heaven.
 3. Ascending the mountain of prayer with Him is essential to share in his Glory of transfiguration.
All people will share in this glory, regardless of marital status, whether virgins or married, despite their social attitudes, despite living in solitude or in the world, whether they are departed or awaiting the second coming.

Conclusion: what can we learn?

4. On the mountain, He grants His people to live a life similar to what St Paul experienced: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Cor 2:9)
5. On the mountain, he grants us to share with him his plans to the salvation of the world.

Glory be to God

