



Light of the East



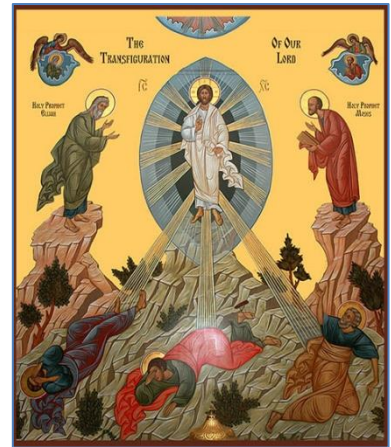
Reflections for our Spiritual Journey

Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church, Roswell, Georgia

The Transfiguration

August 6

The Transfiguration of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ is celebrated each year on August 6; this feast commemorates when Christ appeared in His divine glory on Mount Tabor. While Jesus was speaking to Peter, James and John, a radiant light overshadowed Him and a voice was heard from heaven: *“This is my beloved Son with Whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.”*

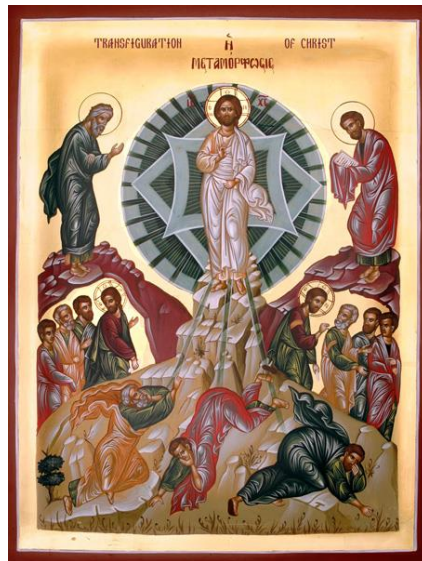


We all instinctively long for happiness. But often we do not know what happiness is and where it lies; we search in places where there is no happiness and where it cannot be. Jesus shows us by His Transfiguration that true happiness lies only in union with God. The entire human essence is transfigured. Unspeakable peace, harmony and joy settle in the soul; the intellect receives enlightenment and all the abilities of a person reach their utmost extent; the soul is filled with divine light and becomes godlike; hearts are filled with a beatitude never before experienced. Now the Kingdom of God enters the human person.

The Transfiguration of our Lord is a revelation of the highest grace of God’s Kingdom. It is not a physical light but a spiritual one, of Christ’s divine nature previously hidden under the veil of His human flesh; it is the fulfillment of all the manifestations of God, made perfect and complete in the person of Christ. It reveals to us the ultimate destiny of all men and all creation to be transformed by the majestic splendor of God Himself. At the Transfiguration the cover which concealed the spiritual world fell from the Apostles’ eyes; now with their spiritual eyes they beheld Christ in his divine power. Only then were their hearts filled with the beatitude they had never experienced before.

The presence of Moses and Elijah at our Lord’s Transfiguration is also of great significance. They are the ones to whom God revealed himself in the Old Covenant: Moses for the Law and Elijah for the Prophets. They now come to worship the Jesus Christ who is the fulfillment of the

Law and the Prophets. Moses and Elijah show us that the Savior is here, that he is the Son of God to whom the Father himself bears witness; he is the Lord of all creation, of the Old and New testaments, of the living and the dead: *“I have the keys of hell and of death”* (Rev. 1:18).



In the icon of the Transfiguration Christ is the central figure appearing within a circular *mandorla* (an almond shaped circle radiating the brilliance of divine glory and light). He is clearly at the visual and the theological center of the icon. His right hand is raised in blessing and his left hand contains a scroll symbolic of his authority as the Living Word of God. Elijah and Moses stand at the top of separate mountain peaks to the left and right of Christ. Together they represent the Law and the Prophets; both men experienced visions of God (Moses on Mount Sinai and Elijah on Mount Carmel). Below Christ the three Apostles lie overcome by the Uncreated Light of Divinity. The icon directs our attention toward the transfiguration and to the glory of God as revealed in Jesus. He would soon journey to Jerusalem to experience humiliation, torture and death; however, the glorious light of

the resurrection is revealed to strengthen the Apostles in the trials they also will soon endure for the Kingdom of God. Enthroned in light, Christ draws together the perspective of time and eternity: the past in Moses and Elijah; the present in the Apostles; and the future when all of creation will be transfigured and filled with divine light ... revealing to us who we are and who we are called to be.

The Eastern Church commemorates this day with the blessing of fruits, since our Lord's Transfiguration took place during the Hebrew Festival of Harvest Fruits. It represents the fullness of God's gifts, the "metamorphosis" of the Christian into a new "creation" as described by Saint Paul. Just as our Lord was transfigured with the glory of God on Mount Tabor, so we are changed like the tiny seed which blossoms into delectable fruit. Enthroned in the light of glory, Christ calls us to the fullness of not just who we are but who we are to be. It is a time-honored tradition of Byzantine Catholics to bring fruit to Church on the Feast to be blessed, to share after Liturgy and to take home to celebrate the feast in our families. These traditions are a wonderful way of connecting our spiritual commitment with our everyday life, especially for our children. All are invited to bring a fruit dish this coming Sunday to share after Liturgy; partake of harvest fruits and celebrate the glorious Transfiguration of our Lord and the "new life we possess in Christ Jesus!"



I wish to stay all by myself and setting aside flesh and the world, not touching anything corporal without extreme need, talking to myself and God, live above all things visible, and always carry in myself clear divine images unmixed with earthly delusive impressions, be and become an unshadowed mirror of God and divinity, acquire light to light, adding the brightest to the paler; and all this until we rise to the Source of Illumination and reach the blessed end.

St Gregory the Theologian