

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Moses spoke with God face to face. The unbridled glory, the radiant imminence of the Divine Presence changed Moses. It changed Nadab and Abihu too. When God invited them, with Aaron, to ascend the mountain into His presence, they saw God. But when they drew nigh unto the Presence of God uninvited, and they were consumed by holy fire. A sinner cannot stand in the Presence of God. His holiness is overwhelming, unholiness must be destroyed.

But not so Moses. God bid Moses approach Him. In mercy, for the salvation of His people, God was pleased to reveal Himself to faithful Moses. But one does not draw nigh unto God and remain unchanged. Moses spoke with God, and afterward his face shone. When the veil was lifted, the light of his face shone too brightly for men to bear. So Moses would veil his face, that men be able to withstand the reflected glory of God.

Peter, James and John saw the veil lifted. Not the veil that covered Moses face, but the veil of the Flesh of God the Son. John son of Zebedee writes “In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men... He was the True Light, who enlightens every man...” John saw the Light of which he wrote. He saw it as, for an incredible moment, the Divine Nature of God the Son overcame His Human Nature, and His Glorious Divinity was revealed visibly to men.

The face of Christ shone not like Moses’ face, reflecting the glory of another, but with the glory that Moses beheld. The Lord’s face was like the sun, and His clothes became as white as light. Peter too saw it, and by his Record he testifies to you this day of what they saw: the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; His majesty, of which they were eyewitnesses.

They saw what Moses saw, they saw what Nadab and Abihu saw, and they lived – for a time. They lived to tell, to write, to preach, that through their Testimony what they saw be a vision your faith too beholds. They wrote so that you could behold, with the eyes of faith, the fullest Epiphany of your Lord.

Moses and the Prophets promised what Peter, James and John saw: that in Christ God took on Flesh and became Man. As evidence, as a testimony, as a witness, that you know that the center of Moses and the Prophets is Christ, Moses and Elijah appeared on that radiant mount with the Transfigured Lord. In a great Mystery, there they spoke openly with Him.

St. Luke tells us what they said: they spoke of His exodus, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. The Exodus was the greatest salvific act of the Old Testament. But this Exodus would surpass it, when the momentary brightness of the Transfiguration would be eclipsed by the hours of darkness at Golgotha. The Face that shone like the sun on the mountain would be pierced with thorns, the clothes white as light exchanged for purple robe and gravecloths.

The voice of God the Father is seldom recorded in Holy Scripture. This Epiphany season includes two such miracles – the voice of the Father at the Baptism of our Lord, and His voice at the Transfiguration. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”, the Father proclaims. “Hear Him!” They are not words for Moses and Elijah, they already knew God in His Kingdom of Glory. They are Words for Peter, James and John. And the Father’s proclamation of who Christ is, and His command “Hear Him!” are both Words for you. For as Peter would

confess, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life.” That Gospel Word, that Word of Salvation, Reconciliation, Redemption and life is a Word for you this day.

And it is a Word you need, for you have a lot in common with Peter, James and John. You are fallen. You have not been glorious or holy, your works have not shined like the sun. And your fallen flesh has at times had its way with you. You have sinned. You have deserved what Nadab and Abihu received. So the account of the Transfiguration of your Lord offers you great hope, Gospel hope, eternal hope.

For the Apostles and Evangelists did not follow cunningly devised fables when they made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And they heard that voice which came from heaven when they were with Him on the holy mountain. And so they, and you, have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

But the Lord Christ is not a god that appears only in glory – on the mount of Transfiguration and on the Last Day, but He is a God that is, as He has promised to be, with you always. He brings His forgiveness and life to you every day. He brings His comfort to you in the midst of the darkness of this world. He brings His life to you even in the face of death. He brings His salvation to you while you are surrounded by a lost and condemned world. In Christ, with you the Father is well pleased.

He comes to you as surely as He was made manifest to Peter, James and John. Exalted, ascended, He is still God and Man. But He works through lowly, earthly things to bring you into His Kingdom. The Spirit He promised to send comes to you in water, as you are sundered from the dying and brought into the Kingdom of Life and Light. His forgiveness is made yours. The Word which the Father commands you to hear is preached and publicly read, that you may “Hear Him”, that your faith be made strong.

And like Peter, James and John, you ascend the Chancel steps this day to meet Christ on this liturgical mountain, at this Communion rail, as He veils Himself in Bread and Wine. You eat and drink the Christ they saw, the Christ they touched, the Christ they preached. Receiving Christ, you proclaim in faith “It is good Lord to be here. But unlike the three on that miraculous mount, you are not afraid. For your Lord comes to you in love, for your eternal healing. And your eyes of faith look up, and see only Jesus. His Light is the Light that brings you life.

In the Transfiguration of our Lord there is great comfort and hope for you, you who are redeemed by His Blood, you who dwell for a time in the fallen flesh. Your Lord took on Flesh to save you, body and soul. Seeing Him now by faith, He has promised that soon you will be transformed. You will receive a heavenly body, an immortal, imperishable body. But you will not come down from the heavenly mountain and be changed back. You will be transformed, and dwell with Him in Paradise forever.

St. Matthew 17:1-9

The Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2019 A.✠ D.

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