

Transfiguration - A  
Daniel 7:9-10; 13-14;  
2 Peter 1:16-19;  
Matthew 17:1-9  
Little Flower - 8/6/17

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. Many of you may remember that in 2002 Pope St. John Paul II added the Luminous Mysteries to the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary. He included the Transfiguration of Jesus as the fourth Luminous Mystery.

The Transfiguration came at a critical time in Jesus' ministry. St. Matthew's Gospel suggests it came six days after Peter's dramatic profession of faith in Jesus at Caesarea Philippi: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" [16:16; JB]. However, although Peter gave the right answer, it immediately became clear that he did not understand what it meant. When Jesus prophesied his passion, death, and resurrection, Peter refused to accept it. Therefore, the Transfiguration helped to prepare the disciples for Jesus' passion and death by giving them a glimpse of Jesus' future glory.

More importantly, the Transfiguration also revealed to Peter, James, and John who and what Jesus was. First, Moses and Elijah appeared to them and were conversing with Jesus. For the Jews, Moses was the ultimate lawgiver. Elijah was the ultimate prophet. Their presence with Jesus on the mountain proclaimed that he was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Therefore, he was the Christ, the Messiah.

After Peter proclaimed it good that they were there and offered to make three tents, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them from which came the voice, "*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased, listen to him.*" This was one of only three times we hear the voice of God the Father in the Gospels. God the Father affirms Jesus as his beloved Son. Therefore, not only is he the Christ, the Messiah, he is also the Son of the living God.

The Transfiguration validated Peter's profession of faith in Jesus: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" [16:16; JB]. In today's reading from St. Peter's Second Letter, we hear his reflection on this experience many years later. He argues that they were eyewitnesses of Jesus' majesty when the Father authenticated Jesus as his Son. However, Tradition suggests that the Transfiguration was also a revelation of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with the presence of the Holy Spirit symbolized by the bright cloud.

In today's first reading, the Prophet Daniel had a vision of the glory of God and the glory of the messiah. In the Gospels, the phrase *Son of Man* is a phrase that Jesus primarily used to refer to himself as he did in today's Gospel. We hear this title frequently, but I am not sure we stop and think about what Jesus might have meant by it. Traditional biblical interpretation would suggest that it refers to the humility of the incarnate Son of God, who, as we read in Paul's Letter to the Philippians, "*though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness*" and having been "*found human in appearance,....humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross*" [2:6-8].

My brothers and sisters, the Transfiguration also reveals us to ourselves. If the Transfiguration gave the apostles a glimpse into Jesus' future glory notwithstanding his impending suffering and death, it also gave them hope for their future glory as well. Likewise, Jesus' Transfiguration gives us hope by giving us a glimpse into our own future glory. Finally, Jesus' transfiguration calls us to be transformed, transfigured, into the best version of ourselves or, to use a more theological phrase, to grow into the likeness of the risen Christ.