



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

The Essence of God's Glory August 23, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is Transfigured! On Mt. Tabor!

As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed. (Matthew 17:22-23)

St. Matthew records this second announcement of our Lord's Passion only a few verses after he records the story of our Lord's Transfiguration, the Feast which we are celebrating today and during the octave that follows. He recounts how Jesus took his three closest disciples, Peter, James and John, up to Mount Tabor, where "He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light." He relates how He spoke with Moses and Elias, the great and highly respected representatives of the Law and the Prophets; how the disciples fell on their faces in awe; how the voice of the Father came from the cloud which overshadowed them, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased; listen to Him;" and, finally, how the Lord touched the disciples, saying, "Rise and have no fear."

The texts that we sang last evening in church during Vespers actually focus both on the great and wondrous vision of our Lord's Transfiguration, the "glorious" aspects of it, along with the announcement He made later of His Passion. The two cannot and must not be separated.

We often think only of the wondrous and glorious aspects of the Transfiguration as if this were the only message of the feast. To be sure, the light which shone forth through our Lord are indeed manifestations of His divinity. But it is only when these aspects of His manifestation to the disciples are coupled with the announcement of His Passion that we understand fully and rightly. For the glory of God is most especially shown in His self-giving and sacrifice for the Life of the world. This is why we have the sign on our altar cross at church, attached above the head of our Lord, that reads, "The King of glory." The glory of God, of essence of the Holy Trinity and of each of the Persons of the Holy Trinity is the glory of self-giving, sacrifice and love. Our Lord's glory manifested on the Day of the Transfiguration when He shone like the sun, is only understood totally when we seen the essence of that brightness, which He demonstrated through His self-giving for the Life of the world on the cross.

The sign above the body of our Lord on the cross in our little church is not merely a reminder of the brightness and splendor of His divinity; it is a proclamation that His glory is precisely in His humility, His self-giving, His acceptance of His humiliation and death for the Life of the world. This is among the greatest messages of this truly awesome and great Feast. If we would partake of that glory ourselves, Brothers and Sisters, then we must not only accept His self-giving in lives of repentance and forgiveness, but we too must offer ourselves in love and self-giving for the benefit and well-being of others. This is our way as His disciples.

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Fr. Elias

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