

“While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.” The Transfiguration was a divine condescension of the Father that granted a small glimpse of the glory of Christ to the Apostles, Peter, James and John for the sake of our salvation. What the Apostles saw was Jesus the Christ illuminated by the immutable light of the Father, they beheld Christ as the angels see him. Throughout his ministry Jesus had hidden his glory from his followers because if they had witnessed his true glory they could not have been forgiven their rejection of him, just as the fallen angels could not be forgiven because they knew the fullness of truth and rejected it. In hiding his glory Jesus was protecting those whom he came to save and by doing so he won for them the possibility of forgiveness. He reminded the Father of this from the cross when he said, “*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!*”

But why then did Jesus allow his glory to be seen by Peter, James and John? He did so that they might be fortified for the shock of the crucifixion. Jesus knew that the horrific events of his passion, death and resurrection would be so devastating to his disciples that they would not be able to remain faithful without this particular grace from God. In the Transfiguration, Jesus’ own divinity was revealed by the Father. But this singularly remarkable event in Jesus’ ministry did not occur in isolation, for it had been foreshadowed in the Old Testament in God’s revelation of himself to Moses in the burning bush on Mount Sinai. The parallels between these two events are revealing: each takes place on a mountain, each occurs on a seventh day, each shows forth the glory of God and each reports God speaking from a cloud. In the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah are the visible representation of the Law and the Prophets and their conversing with Jesus shows him to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. Only Luke tells us that

Elijah and Moses spoke to Jesus about his own exodus: his passion, death and resurrection. It was important for the disciples to hear this so that they might know that there was a divine purpose in all that Jesus was to undergo and that he could accomplish his mission only through his total submission to the Father's will.

During this Lenten season we should seek to climb the holy mountain of our faith and we should seek to enter into the presence of God by contemplating, in the spirit, the holiness of the Father, the goodness of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Transfiguration we not only contemplate the mystery of God, we also listen to his divine word addressed to us, "*this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well please. Listen to him*". Seeing and hearing, contemplating and obeying are the way that leads through the darkness of this world and into the resplendent light of the holy mountain where the most holy Trinity dwells. The Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Jesus' second coming, when he will transform our mortal bodies to be like his own in glory, but it also reminds us that the way to the kingdom of God lies along the path of persecution and suffering. Let us therefore pray in the spirit of St John Damascene, "You have allured me with desire for you, O Christ, and have transformed me with your divine love. Burn away my sins with your spiritual fire and deign to fill me with your sweetness, so that leaping with joy I may exalt all your manifestations".

May the Blessed Virgin Mary teach us to always wonder at the mystery of her Son and to put into our hearts those mysteries that are too deep for our understanding so that we may be transformed by the light of the Holy Spirit that one day we might savor the full sweetness of Christ himself in all his true glory.