

THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, 6/19 August 2021, the Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ was celebrated by the Patriarchate at the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, the place where this event happened.

On this Feast, the Church follows the Gospel narrative by which before His Passion, our Lord Jesus Christ took Peter, James and John, His Disciples, and revealed to them the Glory of His Divinity, as much as it was possible for them to comprehend. His face shone and his clothes were brighter than the sun, while a bright cloud overshadowed them and Moses and Elijah appeared next to Him, talking about His Passion, which was about to happen in Jerusalem. At the same time, the voice of the Father was heard from the heavens saying: "This is my beloved Son," in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him". After this vision, Jesus again took His disciples and went down the mountain and told them not to tell anyone about what they had witnessed before His Resurrection.

For the commemoration of this event, by which the Lord revealed to His Disciples and to us the first beauty of man before Adam's fall, and the possibility to regain it through the Transfigured Christ, the Divine Liturgy was officiated in an All-night Vigil by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences; Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, Archimandrite Parthenios, and Priests from the Galilee district. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Philotheos and his choir in Greek and Arabic, as the Vigil was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr

Evangelos Vlioras, and not many faithful Christians due to the covid restrictions.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light” (Matt. 17:1-2).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,
Noble Christians

The grace of our Saviour Christ has gathered us all in this high mountain of Tabor to celebrate the great and wondrous event of the utmost philanthropy of God the Father, namely the Transfiguration of Jesus before His Disciples, Peter, James and John, and also the prophets Moses and Elijah. This event happened forty days before Christ's Passion.

Apostle Peter refers to the irrefutable witness of his presence on Mount Tabor when he wants to prove that the teaching of Christ, which the Disciples preached, was not based on human imagination and mind, and says about his personal experience: “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the holy mount” (2 Peter 1:16-18).

During His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, the Lord revealed to His Disciples, firstly His power, which was shown to them [the disciples] by God the Father, through the glory of His Only-Begotten Son. And this glory is no other than the energy of the inaccessible Divine Light. “God is light” (1 John 1:5), the Evangelist John preaches. “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have

the light of life" (John 8:12), the Lord says. This truth is clearly phrased by the hymnographer who says: "O changeless Light of the Light of Thine unbegotten Begetter, today, O Word, have we now seen in Thy Light's manifestation the Father and Holy Spirit as Light on Tabor, guiding with light all creation" (Exapostilarion, Matins).

Secondly, [the Lord revealed to His Disciples] His presence. This means that the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ on the high mountain is a visible and tangible foretaste of the future glorious Kingdom of God, as the hymnographer also says precisely: "Clearly showing the exchange that Adam's mortal race shall make with Thy glory at Thy dread and second coming on the earth, Thou wast transfigured, O Saviour, upon mount Tabor" (Matins, Kathisma 1). And in more detail, our Saviour Christ, You were transfigured on Mount Tabor to prove and guarantee the expected glorious and dreadful Second Coming of Yours, and also the change that will happen then to the faithful and reverend Christians, which is their eternal glory.

Both the power and the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in His Transfiguration, which was made known to us by the Holy Apostles the Evangelists, refer mainly and primarily to the strengthening of the Disciples' faith, that Jesus Christ "is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased", as per the voice inside the cloud (Matt. 17:5). This very truth we hear from the hymnographer with the words: "On the mount Thou was transfigured, and Thy disciples, as much as they could bear, beheld Thy glory, O Christ our God; that when they should see Thee crucified, they would know Thy Passion to be willing, and would preach to the world that Thou, in truth, art the Effulgence of the Father" (Kontakion).

Christ's glory, which the Disciples saw, is also enjoyed by all the saints who have registered as citizens of the heavenly city, "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23).

This glory of Christ is also enjoyed by the pious and righteous Christians in the Kingdom of God. "Then shall the

righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43), the Lord says.

The Holy Deacon Stephen beheld this glory of Christ, as he was "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). He looked up in heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus sitting at the right of God (Acts 7:55). And Saint Paul preaches that all men who live in Christ reflect the Lord's glory: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

Interpreting these words, Saint Chrysostom says: "Just like the pure silver before the sun rays reflects the rays itself...in the same manner, the man's soul that is purified and has become brighter than silver receives a ray from the glory of the Holy Spirit and reflects that ray".

In other words, my dear Brethren, we are called to live a life in Christ, which means to actively participate in the holy sacramental life of the Church as faithful and genuine children of its Body, namely Christ. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23) the psalmist proclaims. This means that the path to salvation lies only on sincere reverence, namely to our transfiguration in Christ.

Let us pray to our Saviour Christ who was Transfigured on this mount, that by the prayers of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, He may "shine upon us sinners His light ever-unending" and lead us to our transfiguration. Amen."

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a reception by the renovator of the Monastery Archimandrite Hilarion and a meal at lunchtime.

For this feast there was also a festive Divine Liturgy in Gethsemane and Ramallah, under the hospitality of the Hegoumens, Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela, and Archimandrite Galaktion respectively.

From Secretariat-General