

THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, August 6 / 19, 2022, the Despotic feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord was celebrated at the Patriarchate. During this holiday, the Church remembers that our Lord Jesus Christ before His passion took three of the pre-qualified disciples, Peter and James and John, and they went up to Tabor, where He was transfigured before them.

There, He hid His human nature for a little while and revealed to the disciples His divine nature in its brilliance, shining more than the sun and His clothes were now white as snow and was seen with the prophets Moses and Elias, conversing with them about His passion, which would happen in Jerusalem in the near future. Then a bright cloud overshadowed them and yet the voice of the Father was heard "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am blessed, you are listening to Him" and Peter asked Him to build three tents for them to stay there, (Matt. 17, 1-5). The Lord revealed this vision, showing the glory of His Resurrection, to strengthen His disciples during the time of passion and to show the original beauty of man before the fall, the lost and able to be regained by men in Him. After this, the Lord took His disciples and came down from the Mount.

This event was celebrated on Mount Tabor with an outdoor All-night Vigil, presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theofilos. Concelebrating with Him were their Eminences, the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Bishop Sergius of Estonia of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archimandrite Parthenios, Archimandrite Alexander from the Russian MISSIA in Jerusalem, many visiting Priests from the Patriarchates of Moscow and Romania, many Priests from the Jerusalem

Patriarchate, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Hegoumen of Acre Archimandrite Philotheos and the choir established by him as a large congregation of faithful Christians attended the service.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Being perfect God, Thou becamest perfect mortal, mingling manhood with the entire Godhead in Thine own hypostasis, which Moses and Elias saw in its two natures on Mount Tabor”, Saint John Damascene proclaims (Minaion, Ode 3, Canon 2, Troparion 3).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Today the Holy Church of Christ most joyfully celebrates the commemoration of the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, that is why we also, both the clergy and the people came to this holy place of Mount Tabor, to exclaim along with the Apostles; thou art blessed the God of our Fathers.

“What a great and terrible spectacle is seen today! The visible sun shone down from the heaven, but from the earth, the incomparable spiritual Sun of Righteousness shone out like lightning upon Mount Tabor” (Minaion, Ode 6, Canon 2, Troparion 1), Saint John Damascene says, marvelling at the event of the Transfiguration of our Saviour Christ. Indeed, “now the unheard-of is heard; for the Son, Who without father came from the Virgin, is gloriously testified by the Father’s voice to be God and man, the same unto the ages” (Ode 7, Canon 2, Troparion 3).

Because Christ spoke many times to His Disciples about His Passion on the Cross, His death and the three-day burial, and about His glorious Resurrection, as well as about the

martyrdom which His Disciples would face at the end of their lives; and because He wanted to show them what exactly is His future glory, Who is “the beloved Son of God the Father” (cf. Matt. 17:5), He took with Him “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. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him..., and a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face and were sore afraid” (Matt. 17:1-6).

Interpreting these Gospel words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “We say that the Transfiguration of Christ happened without casting off the human form of His body, but with the cladding of some luminous glory, which transformed the colour of the unworthy form of the flesh to an inner appearance, just like Saint Paul says: “It [the body] is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power” (1 Cor. 15:43). Therefore, the body is naked flesh, not completely covered neither with glory, nor with natural brilliance, but it has simplicity and lack of divine glory along with infirmity. At the time of the resurrection, there will be a complete change of glory according to the divine nature, and not a change of form. Because it is then that it will be luminous with the cloak of the divine glory: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43).

Noteworthy of today’s feast is the fact that “He Who Is, today was transfigured upon Mount Tabor before the disciples, Having taken on the nature of man, He showed in Himself the original beauty of its image” according to the hymnographer (Great Vespers, Aposticha 1). In other words, our Saviour Jesus Christ revealed to His disciples the unspeakable greatness of His divinity, which is the uncreated light, as the Evangelists

narrate: "And [Jesus] was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17:2). Interpreting this phrase from the Gospel, the connoisseur of the divine illumination of the uncreated light, Saint Gregory Palamas, says: "But what is this cloud, and how did it overshadow them, while it was so luminous? Could it be the uncreated light, in which God dwells, the light that He is clothed upon like a garment? Because it is said: "He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies" (Psalm 18:11). And as the Apostle says, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16). Therefore, here, both light and darkness are one and the same, the light that overshadows due to its extreme brilliance".

Of this very divine luminous power of the working of the unapproachable and uncreated light of the Triune Divinity did the Prophets and Apostles who were present on Mount Tabor become communicants and seers, and along with them all the righteous and the Saints of the Church of Christ.

Let us pray then, my dear brethren, to our God and Saviour Christ, Who was transfigured on this Mount, that the light of His face may also shine upon us and we may be deemed worthy of the vision of His unapproachable glory. And let us say along with the hymnographer: "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). Amen! Many Happy Returns!"

Likewise, a morning Divine Liturgy was celebrated by the Most Reverend Metropolitan of Nazareth Kyriakos in this holy Church, fully consecrated by the rector Archimandrite Hilarion, who also hosted a meal at lunchtime.

This event was also celebrated in the Holy Monastery of the

Transfiguration in Ramallah, presided over by the Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, under the hospitality of the active Hegoumen Archimandrite Galaktion and the participation of a large congregation who prayed in contrition.

It was also celebrated at the Tomb of the Theotokos in Gethsemane, presided over by His Eminence, Archbishop Theodosios Sebastia, under the hospitality of His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Hellenoupolis and attended by a large congregation of monks, nuns and pilgrims.

From Secretariat-General