

August 6th: Transfiguration of Our Lord (A)

Gospel text (Mt 17,1-9): Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain where they were alone. Jesus' appearance was changed before them: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became bright as light. Just then Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Jesus. Peter spoke and said to Jesus, «Master, it is good that we are here. If you so wish, I will make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah».

Peter was still speaking when a bright cloud covered them in its shadow, and a voice from the cloud said, «This is my Son, the Beloved, my Chosen One. Listen to him». On hearing the voice, the disciples fell to the ground, full of fear. But Jesus came, touched them and said, «Stand up, do not be afraid». When they raised their eyes, they no longer saw anyone except Jesus. And as they came down the mountain, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone what they had just seen, until the Son of Man be raised from the dead.

«This is my Son, my Chosen one»

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Today, the Gospel speaks of the Transfiguration of our Lord on Mount Tabor. Jesus, after Peter's confession, started to say that it was necessary for the Son of man to be condemned to death and that He would rise on the third day. This passage of the Transfiguration of Jesus has to be placed within this context. Athanasius the Sinaite writes that «He, who had donned our miserable goatskin tunics, is today dressed with a divine dress and a dazzling light wraps him up as a

robe». The message that Jesus Transfigured brings to us is the Father's words: «This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him» (Mk 9:7). To listen means to abide by his will, to contemplate his person, to imitate him, to put into practice his advice, to take up our own cross and follow him.

To avoid any misunderstandings or equivocal, «He ordered them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man be risen from the dead» (Mk 9:9). The three apostles are looking at Jesus Transfigured, signal of his divinity, but the Saviour does not want them to spread the news until after his resurrection, when it will be possible to understand the scope of this episode. Christ speaks to us through the Gospel and when we pray; we can then repeat Peter's words: «Master, it is good that we are here» (Mk 9:5), particularly, after the Holy Communion.

Today's mass preface summarizes in a very nice way the Transfiguration of our Lord. It says: «Because the Lord, Christ, having announced his death to his disciples, reveals his glory, at the sacred mountain and, having the Law and the prophets as witnesses, He makes them understand his Passion is necessary to reach the glory of the resurrection». A lesson we Christians should never forget.