

We end the season of Epiphany with the last manifestation of the divinity of Jesus before His death and resurrection. After this Sunday we will prepare for Lent and Holy Week, when the Lord fulfilled His humiliation.

Six days after the Lord first told the disciples about his death and resurrection, and just before today's text of the transfiguration, we read of Simon Peter's confession. **Matthew 16:13-20** "Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Simon Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Greek word for Messiah, also as the Son of God, was a key event in Jesus' ministry.

Peter's confession was not the result of asking for a sign or of his own superior understanding. He answered filled with the Holy Spirit.

The faith given by the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is the sole foundation of the church of Christ. If the church rests on faith in Jesus as the Son of the living God, even the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Now, well, after this confession, **Matthew 16:21** "From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

The transfiguration of Jesus confirms to the disciples that He truly is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, as Peter confessed."

The transfiguration is a foretaste of the glory to come: the resurrection of Christ and His exaltation.

Many think that Mount Tabor, at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley, west of the Sea of Galilee, was the Mount of Transfiguration. Today there is a Church of the Transfiguration there.

Others think that the mount of transfiguration is Mount Hermon, part of a group of mountains located in the southern part of the Anti-Lebanon range. These peaks serve as the border between Israel (Golan Heights), Lebanon and Syria.

Some scholars think that the Mount of Transfiguration was Mount Horeb, which is another name for Mount Sinai, because this mount was known as “the holy mountain,” the phrase that Peter used in today’s epistle.

Moses saw the burning bush; he also received the tables of the Law on this holy mountain. The prophet Malachi mentioned Moses and Elijah together in his messianic prophecy.

It was also a confirmation that Jesus is the One who came to fulfill the Law and the Old Testament prophecies.

God also revealed his presence on Mount Sinai in a cloud of light. Peter, James and John heard the same words from the almighty Father that He spoke at Jesus' baptism. **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him!”** With the “Listen to him!” It is corroborated that Jesus is the Prophet prophesied by Moses in Deuteronomy 18.

Only Peter, James, and John were present at the Transfiguration. Under Jewish law, a major event required two or three witnesses.

Peter, James, and John were witnesses of Jesus on other important occasions: the raising of Jairus' daughter, Mark 5:37; and the Passion of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26:37.

The three disciples would never forget what they saw. John wrote in his gospel, **John 1:14** “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

According to the book of Revelation, in St. John vision, Jesus appeared to John in a similar form.

Revelation 1:12-16 “Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,¹³and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.¹⁴The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire,¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.”

Also in our epistle, verse 16: “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

Because He received honor and glory from God the Father, when the father said: **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”** And we heard this voice sent from heaven, when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

Like us, all three were not chosen for their own holiness or their own merits. In Gethsemane Jesus commanded them, “Watch and pray,” but they slept.

After his confession six days before, when Jesus announced his death the first time, Jesus said to Peter: “Get behind me, Satan; you are a stumbling block to me; because you think not of the things of God, but of the things of men.”

And on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter said to him, **“Lord, it is good that we are here; If you wish, I will make three tents here; one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”**

It would be much more pleasant to stay where the glory of heaven had descended, than to go to Jerusalem and let Jesus enter the path of suffering.

At that moment, the Father's voice told them, **“Listen to him!”** And they fell on their faces, and were greatly afraid. **“But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.”**

The Lord also tells us, “Watch and pray,” and like the disciples after the announcement of his death, “If anyone wants to come after me, deny himself, and take his cross, and follow me.”

And above all, “Do not be afraid.” Because He will never leave us or forsake us. Jesus walked with his disciples as a true man and showed them his divine nature at times. But he was always true man and true God. Now sometimes we have our experiences on top of the mountain when we feel the presence of God.

2 Peter 1:19-20 “And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

The transfiguration of Jesus tells us the important things: The Lord who saves us by His Word now and promises to take us to Him when we die.

John 14:1-3 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

On Calvary God is once again on the mountain. His face—not shining like the sun, but distorted in agony. His clothes—not white like lightning, but covered in dirt—stained with sweat—dripping with blood. Flanked by two men. Not Moses and Elijah; but notorious criminals.

Overshadowed not by the great bright cloud, but by the great darkness in the middle of the day. And in His hour of greatest suffering when all of hell is crashing down upon Him. Jesus sheds his blood and with his death and glorious resurrection he conquers death.

There is yet another mountain upon which the Lord is to be found. Like Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and the seventy in our Old Testament reading—like Peter, James, and John in our Gospel lesson; Jesus has an invitation for you.

God is on the mountain, and you a poor miserable sinner are invited to come to this mountain to eat and to drink. This mountain is truly the place where the Lord brings heaven to earth. Just like Moses in Exodus. Just like St. John in Revelation.

On this mountain you find your Savior in His crucified and risen glory. Not clothed in bright white garments, but rather His body, and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine.

Your Savior is manifested in all His glory for you today. Rejoice, for your sins are forgiven and you are free. Amen