

The Transfiguration of our Lord has always been a feast for the imagination, a comfort for the soul meditating on the end time in heaven, a sanctuary of certain hope. It is an occasion of light..heavenly light shining through the form of our Savior..light dispelling shadows of doubt about how we shall be ourselves when all is done, light which rightfully raises our expectations about becoming like Jesus after struggling fallibly for a life of virtue. After all is said and done, it is a day for being as a child again.

As Jesus prays on the mountain, His disciples are slumbering. They awaken as drowsy children to see Jesus transfigured..glorified..and two old men standing with him. They seem to have missed the conversation between Jesus and Moses and Elias, or Elijah. With Moses present it was fitting that the conversation had centered on Jesus' exodus; his departure from earthly life into his death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

What about Elijah's presence? Like Moses before him, Elijah had also met God on Mount Sinai..Now, probably on Mt. Tabor, the disciples were plainly meeting God in Jesus. Further, the last prophet, Malachi, says God will send Elijah, the man who called down fire on false prophets, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord when the earth will be consumed by the fire of God. So on this mountain, time stands still, Moses bearing the the Law and the past and fiery Elijah's presence pointing forward to the end of time. Past, present and future are all one here, so it is a moment plucked out of eternity.

One of the disciples, Peter, awakens as if he were an drowsy child to see what is taking place and sees that the departure of Moses and Elijah is imminent. Excited beyond all measure, like a boy capturing a firefly and caging a bunny, Peter tries to capture the moment with a suggestion that they celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles on the mountaintop. Why?..Because this key feast in Judaism looked back at God's rescue and provision for His people in the Exodus and Wilderness periods. This feast was also regarded as anticipating God's ultimate deliverance of his people at the end of time.

The feast of Tabernacles involved constructing booths to live in for a week. These transitory structures were made of palm branches, leafy boughs, the long stems of willows found by brooks, and the greenery of hadar trees. These verdant tree parts were gathered to symbolize the abundance of water and oases God's people were given during the Exodus, and the beauty of the land of Israel as God's people settled in the Promised Land. The rules for the size of the booths were strictly observed, and only men and boys old enough not to need a mother were required to live there at harvest time.

One is reminded in our own time of the excitement and dedication of boys in their building of backyard forts and stocking them full of KoolAid, Oreos and beef jerky. And one thinks of the mothers and wives always on the sidelines and back steps wagging their heads at the menfolk even if they can't quite project themselves into the picture of booth building.

This time of great joy looked back to Moses' time when God provided the stuff of life, of water and food to His chosen people between leaving Egypt and reaching the Promised land. It looks to the present time of God's provision of the coming of harvest and, with Elijah present, to the end time when God's providing life of a different sort is total. It is this mood of joy, fullness of life, and expectation that Peter understandably wants to retain and pass on to us as he witnesses the Transfiguration of Jesus.

Heaven reacts: a cloud comes on the scene. Recall how the Hebrews were led by God's presence in a pillar of cloud as Moses led them out of Egypt and Jesus' ascending in the cloud, too. In a moment like this Transfiguration, God gave us the truth about Jesus at his baptism when from heaven, He said, "This is my beloved Son." Now, they see this man ..is their God.

The cloud's presence now seems to be God's answer to Peter's suggestion: no booths are needed since God has wrapped the disciples in His glory and Presence. God's very presence is bound up in Jesus. The cloud's presence leaves the disciples fearful, a normal response to God's action. With the departure of the cloud, Moses and Elijah are gone as well. Only Jesus remains, full of past, present, and future.

Even though Peter and the disciples still don't understand that this event heralded Jesus' turning his face to his final destiny of death, resurrection and

Ascension in Jerusalem, how closely we understand Peter's desire that Jesus' Transfiguration be preserved. When God visits us we want to capture the moment, seal it in our memories to look back upon for confidence and strength, preserve it forever. In the Transfiguration, we want to refer back again to how our bodies will look "glorified" once we are finally our real selves.

But Moses and Elijah and Jesus all want us to capture the divine energy of this Transfiguration and daily to be more and more transformed into Him for the remainder of our earthly lives. Transfiguration will be ours; it is now our remaining time to be transformed. Transformation is beckoning in Trinitytide.

Because of the resurrection, the future Jesus gives is now in part, in the Eucharist being our Messianic banquet of the future, in the forgiveness of sins being our fate before we kneel before the mercy seat. And in the Transfiguration of Jesus, we see how we will be, so loved by God that He takes us and wraps we His children in His glory. It is truly a feast day to be a child of God.

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