



The Glory of the Lord's Transfiguration.

We know from the holy Gospel that a great trembling, a great awe seized the holy Apostles on Mount Tabor when they were overshadowed by a cloud, and from this cloud they heard the voice which creation cannot hear without trembling, the voice of its Creator, the voice of God the Father, Who bore witness to His Son.

But it was not only awe the Apostles felt; in the Gospel narrative about the holiday we hear Apostle Peter's words: "Master, it is **good** for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

These words issued from the depths of the Apostle's heart, which was overcome with spiritual rapture and joy, and at this moment Apostle Peter did not even think of what would actually happen if they remained on the mountain; moreover, the Gospel points out that Peter did not know what he was saying, i.e. he did not fully realize the import of his words, but only expressed his spontaneous feelings and joy. It is that blessed feeling of God's presence, which was attested to by the two whom the Lord had summoned - one from the netherworld and the other from the mysterious world beyond - the prophet and God-seer Moses and the prophet and God-seer Elias.

Do you remember how the prophet and God-seer Moses saw Him? The Lord conversed with him as with His friend, and said to him: "I know you better than all the rest," - you are closest of all to Me. And then Moses dared to ask: "Show me Thy glory." And the Lord responded kindly to this request. He only pointed out to His faithful servant that man cannot stand face to face with the glory of God, cannot see the face of God and remain alive (because man would be so overcome with rapture, and joy, and awe, that his mortal being would crumble, would melt like wax in the presence of fire).

For this reason the Lord said: "Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me, and live; but - said the Lord, - there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock, and while My glory passeth by, I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand when I pass by, and thou canst stand and look after Me (see the reflection of My glory) - but thou shalt only see Me from behind, as I pass by."

And so it was: the Bible says that when Moses looked after the departing Lord, his face afterwards always shone like the sun, so that it was impossible to look at him, and when he was among people, he always covered his face and took off the cover only when he prayed to God or was alone. Moreover, according to the Holy Fathers, the One Who appeared to Moses there on the mountain, the One at Whose back he had looked, was the Lord God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity - the Son of God. Thus Moses saw Him, and later he was honored to see Him face to face on Mount Tabor, where Moses himself appeared in glory.

And the prophet and God-seer Elias was worthy to feel the blessed presence of God. He had achieved a great feat: he had led Israel to the true faith, but the evil Queen Jezebel hated him and began threatening him with death. Then Elias became frightened and fled. But it would be wrong to think that he fled because he feared for himself personally and was afraid of death.

When Elias fled into the desert, it was for death that he asked the Lord, - consequently, he did not fear death, but he was afraid that if Jezebel seized him and executed him, it would seem that his work did not end well; the impression would be created that he had committed some crime for which he was justly punished.

And in order for those whom he had brought to God not to be left with such an impression, - Elias hid from the wrath of the evil queen. But there in the desert the angel told him to come out in the morning from the cave in which he was hiding and to stand at its entrance.

Elias is in the cave. He hears the stormy elements pass by: a great and strong wind, a mighty earthquake, a searing fire – “but the Lord was not there,” says the Bible succinctly. And when after all that wafted “a thin voice of coolness,” – a quiet, peaceful and refreshing breeze – it was there that Elias sensed the mysterious presence of God – “and there was the Lord”... Thus he, too, was worthy to stand before His creator and converse with Him; and now, on Mount Tabor, he, together with Moses, stood face to face before the transfigured Lord.

For creation in general, and especially for man, there can be no greater bliss than to be worthy to stand directly before the face of God, - to the degree to which he can stand it without having his mortal essence fall apart.

Therefore the Church sings on the feast of the Transfiguration that the Lord showed His glory to the disciples “in so far as they were able to bear it.” Not all of His awesome and unbearable glory, before which even the angels tremble and are unable to gaze upon, but only a part of His glory, as much as the prophets and the apostles were able to bear.

But the first-created people in paradise possessed this bliss: the Lord appeared to them like a Father, talked with them in paradise as with His children. And only then did they understand what they had had and what they had lost, - just as the Russian saying laments: “We do not treasure what we have, but we weep upon losing it”...

But remember that the Lord calls each one of us to eternal life. There, when the human soul passes into the region of eternity, it will earn this bliss as much as it merits it, for eternal bliss, the bliss of the Heavenly Kingdom, will consist of man being always with God and in God’s realm. And this naturally reminds us, as it should always remind us, of our sins and our imperfection.

Nothing impure or foul will enter the Kingdom of God, and for this reason each one of us has to cleanse himself of all impurity of body and soul here on earth, as the Holy Scriptures tell us, else we will not see the glory of God and our souls will remain in eternal darkness and alienation from God, from which may the Lord deliver us, sinners. Each one of us is greatly sinful, but still we hope that by His mercy the Lord will not deprive us of His Heavenly Kingdom.

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