

August 06

Transfiguration of the Lord

Readings:

First: Daniel 7.9-10, 13-14, "To him was given dominion and glory and kingship" (14a)

Psalm 97, "You, O Lord, are most high over all the earth" (9a)

Second: 2 Peter 1.16-19, "We had been eyewitnesses of his majesty" (16c)

Gospel: Mathew 17.1-9, "He was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun" (2a)

Heaven's touchdown on earth!

Some humans on earth get special God experiences. In the readings today Daniel gets a vision of heaven and of 'the One who is Ancient of Days.' Jesus and the three disciples get another, which St. Peter testifies later. (2 Peter 1.16-19) Sometimes even God needs the experience of heaven! This statement may look puzzling. Now, Jesus is being transfigured. He was God and with God but now just a 'Son of man.' He came down to earth to be a human, to live and experience humanity, and for this period of time he was deprived of his divinity. In other words, he took a total leave of absence from his divinity and put on the garb of humans in every respect except sin.

The life of Jesus the man was permeated with the most negative and devastating of all human experiences, like birth in a cattle shed, poor, homeless, often rejected by friends and relatives, haunted by the authorities, falsely accused, caught, imprisoned, tortured, and murdered as a criminal. Much against his own faith profession, he even felt being forsaken by the Father at the last moment of his human existence. All the above were part of the life he had, and it was his choice.

The transfiguration was a special visit from heaven for the sake of Jesus as well as for his disciples, who desperately needed a glimpse of his divinity in order to affirm later their own faith in him, and to confirm others in it. Jesus needed an assurance for his life mission, which was the path of life and torturous death the Father designed for him, which he willingly accepted. The voice from above and the presence of the Lawgiver Moses and the great Prophet Elijah gave Jesus that confirmation, and the green signal to go ahead on his mission. We do not know the length of that moment when heaven touched down on earth; it could have been a few minutes, hours, or even days.

We may carry the impression that getting such heaven experience is likely to totally changed person for life; not necessarily! The three disciples in this incident behaved the same way as the other nine in their responses at the time of the arrest, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Even a transfiguration or a divine appearance may not make any significant difference in our life and practices except for that moment! Hence, pray: "Lord increase our faith", an ongoing experience through the working of the Spirit.

Fr. George

