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**ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE ON THE FEAST  
OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD**

Dearly beloved in Christ,

This Sunday, August 6, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. The Gospel passage proclaimed at the Divine Liturgy of the Feast tells the story of what we commemorate on this day. The Apostles Peter, James, and John were with the Lord and He “led them up a on a high mountain by themselves” (St Matthew 17:1). As the Lord prayed, His face changed in appearance: it “shone like the sun,” and “His clothes became as white as the light” (v. 2). Then appeared Moses, the great Giver of the Law, and with him Elijah, the greatest of the prophets. The two of them stood on either side of Jesus, and they began to speak with Him, and He with them. We can only begin to imagine how overwhelmed the Apostles must have been to see all of this! In that moment and in their very presence, their Lord and Master, the One with whom they walked and talked and lived their daily lives, was transfigured as He revealed His glory. And as if that were not enough, they witnessed Jesus speaking with the two great heroes and spiritual pillars of God’s chosen people. Overcome by this sight, Peter spoke up and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, let us build three tabernacles: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” (v. 4). The Gospel account further tells us that Peter had not yet finished speaking when a Bright Cloud covered them all, and a Voice “from the Excellent Glory” (2 Peter 1:17) testified to Christ.

There are many lessons to be taken from this high point in the Lord’s earthly ministry. The Apostles’ ascent to the top of Mount Tabor invites us to reflect upon the importance of stepping away from our daily worries and worldly concerns so that we might contemplate the Lord Jesus. We remember that we too are invited to “ascend the mountain of the Lord” (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2), and to share in the transforming glory of the Lord’s Presence (*cf.* 2 Corinthians 3:18). We are regularly reminded of this call to leave behind the distractions of daily life during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, as we sing the words: “Let us ... now lay aside all earthly cares.” Only in this way can we come into the Presence of the Lord, unhindered and unburdened by the cares of this worldly existence.

Still, at the end of this spectacular experience on Mount Tabor, the Apostles came down from the heights they had ascended. Having experienced this singular moment at the very

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summit of a notably high mountain, they returned to the valley down below. They had to go back to their daily lives, despite Peter's eagerness to set up three tents as a way to preserve the experience for a while longer. Yet Peter, James, and John had also been transformed and transfigured; their lives were forever changed as a result of that amazing moment. They had seen the Lord, literally, in a new light. They understood and recognized Him more fully. Truly, He was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Truly, the glory of His divinity had been revealed, and these chosen Apostles took that experience with them as they descended from the mountain. They returned to their daily lives energized by their faith in the One Whom God had sent, and they were prepared for the life of the world to also be transformed.

This happens with us as well: we too have our own experiences "at the mountaintop." Our experience of Christ takes many forms, but it can most easily be identified in the Mysteries of the Church, and most particularly in the Holy Mystery of the Eucharist. In the moment in which we receive the Holy Gifts, we experience Christ directly, physically, and spiritually. He comes to us and into our souls and bodies us so that we might be transformed and transfigured with Him, as were the Apostles Peter, James, and John. But then, having had this direct experience of the Transfigured and Transfiguring Christ, we return to the valley of our lives, to our daily concerns and activities. We return to our daily lives and regular routines in order to fulfill our call to be Christ's transforming presence in the midst of a wounded and hurting world.

In the revelatory moment of the Transfiguration, the Voice of the heavenly Father is heard saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (St Matthew 17:5). Beloved, let us hear the Lord in the many ways in which He speaks to us! Let us hear His voice calling us to unite ourselves to Him in order to be transfigured with Him. And during this Dormition Fast, as we prepare for the celebration of the Falling Asleep of the Most Holy *Theotokos*, let us turn to her, the one who most fully heard the word of the Lord and kept it (*cf.* St Luke 11:28), asking Her to teach us to listen to the voice of the Lord, so that we too may experience the ultimate transfiguration that awaits us in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Wishing you and yours a blessed and joyous Feast, I remain,

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D'.

**DANIEL**

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest