

## Feast of the Transfiguration

First Reading: [Dn 7:9-10, 13-14](#)

Responsorial Psalm: [Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 9](#)

Second Reading: [2 Pt 1:16-19](#)

Gospel: [Mt 17:1-9](#)

The readings are available at:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/080623.cfm>



Basilica of the Transfiguration, Mt Tabor

The Feast of the Transfiguration challenges disciples to a greater trust in God. Upon a mountain is the place to encounter God. It is a place above the daily challenges and closer to the heavens. The truth about Jesus is revealed here. Recalling the voice from heaven at his baptism, Jesus' identity is reaffirmed as the "Beloved Son" and that he is the one to whom to listen. As Moses and Elijah fade, only Jesus is left, the one who offers the true understanding of all the law and prophets.

Fear is the usual human response to the action of God. The angel tells Mary not to be afraid at the Annunciation. The fear of the divine is not something that one can overcome on one's own. It is only by the power of God, by the encouragement of Jesus, that one can focus on what God is doing and cooperate with God.

Some aspects link the past and the future with the present. Moses and Elijah are in the past. They both encountered God on Mt Sinai (Horeb), and both were given a mission to fulfill. Moses' face was radiant after the encounter, and he brought the law to the people. Elijah was one of the greatest prophets who made God's will known in his time and place. They appear conversing with Jesus who is the fulfillment of their work.

The future is shown in Jesus. He takes on the appearance of his resurrected form. Like the disciples, we do not have a full understanding of Jesus and do not have a clear grasp of "risen from the dead." The vision offers us a glimpse of where we are going as followers of Jesus.

Many of the contemporaries of Jesus, including those who were interested in him, were scandalized by his death. The common assumption is that the Messiah would be a victorious warrior who would rid Judah of occupation and defeat their enemies. Jesus' victory would be very different. He would triumph through suffering and death to new life. This concept could not be understood. Thus, Jesus warns them not to tell anyone for no one will understand until after his death and resurrection.

A full understanding of Jesus can only come from God. All that one can say about God is an approximation. God is infinite but words can only describe what is limited. Our understanding of God is limited by our words to speak about God. Similarly, human understanding of how God could be a creature with human nature also falls short. As a disciple, one comes to know God through the actions of God and the lives of other disciples. Only the Spirit can open us to a deeper understanding. It was this limitation that led St Thomas Aquinas to say all his theological work was rubbish compared to the greatness of God.

Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man. This phrase originates in the Book of Daniel which is the first reading for the feast. The heavenly court has gathered, and God is reigning over it. God's throne is of fire. Fire is associated with the presence of God and links to God's

presence in the burning bush. The books of humanity are opened. It is time for judgment. God needs to set things right, punish the enemies of God's people, and send them a person to lead them.

One like the Son of Man comes, and he is given kingship over all the earth. Jesus alludes to this passage by calling himself "Son of Man." He is stating that he is the one sent by God, and this comes just after the declaration by the Father, "Listen to him."

The reading from 2 Peter presents another testimony to the Transfiguration. It serves to affirm that Jesus was real and that the Gospel is authentic. It is not a mythological tale but one that was witnessed. Challenges arose in early Christianity that the story of Jesus was just like some of the myths of the Greek and Roman gods. The Gospel is true and trustworthy.

### **Themes**

Jesus as God and human  
The Paschal Mystery

Son of man  
Mysticism

### **Reflection Questions:**

What is your understanding of Jesus as both God and human?

How do you connect God's work in your past, your present, and your future?

What challenges do you face in trying to speak about God?

How is the death and resurrection of Jesus a challenge for many to understand?

### **Prayer Suggestions:**

For the Church: that God will transform us through our listening to the Word of God and sharing in the Eucharist so that we can radiate God's glory through our lives

For the grace to be faithful witnesses: that as Peter was empowered to share the Good News after seeing Christ transfigured, may we also give testimony to Christ as we see God at work in us and in the lives of those around us

For the grace to recognize Christ each day: that God will give us open and attentive hearts to recognize Jesus in the many ways that He comes into our lives and the courage to follow wherever Christ leads us

For those, whose lives have been overshadowed by pain, sickness, or grief: that Christ be the light who dispels their darkness and that the power of His resurrection guides them to new beginnings

For an end to the use of nuclear weapons: that God will protect the world from the danger of nuclear weapons and guide negotiators in finding a path to disarmament