

Homily based on the readings from August 6, 2024 (Daniel 7.9-10, 13-14; 2 Peter 1.16-19; Mark 9.2-10)

The Transfiguration of the Lord, which we celebrate today, was one of the pivotal moments in Christ's earthly ministry. For the first time, Jesus revealed the fullness of his divine nature to a select group of his disciples: "he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them." It is important to recognize, though, that Jesus was not altered in any way by the Transfiguration; his disciples simply beheld him as he truly is – as he always has been.

Today's Old Testament reading, from the Book of Daniel, presents a vision of Christ's eternal kingship :

One like a Son of man coming,
on the clouds of heaven ...

His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not be taken away,
his kingship shall not be destroyed.

Nevertheless, that is not how Christ chose to present himself – at least initially – to the world and to his own disciples. He did not assume the role of an earthly king, but a simple carpenter from a poor village. His purpose was not to astound his apostles with the brightness of his glory, but to allow them to partake in that glory by giving “his life as a ransom for many.” The Transfiguration was essentially the only moment, prior to his Resurrection, when Jesus offered a select few of his followers a brief glimpse of his true nature.

It is important to note that the Transfiguration took place shortly after Jesus had first foretold his own suffering and death. More than that, he had demanded that his disciples be willing to lay down their own lives as well: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” These sacrifices were not intended to be an

empty act of self-destruction, but would lead to the fullness of eternal life: “whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it.” Nevertheless, the disciples – Peter especially – would not understand, could not understand. They needed direct, first-hand experience. They needed to become “eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

And so Jesus took these three disciples – Peter, James, and John – up the mountain, to show them what was coming: not just Crucifixion and martyrdom, but the eternal glory they were all destined to receive. In other words, Jesus had *told* his disciples about Good Friday, but he had to *show* them Easter.

Is it any wonder the disciples wanted to stay on the mountain? From that vantage point, they could behold the glory of Easter without enduring the pain of Good Friday. Any one of us would surely make the same choice. Nevertheless, there is no shortcut to the Kingdom of Heaven: the joys that come at Easter cannot exist without the sorrows

we experience on Good Friday. Christ was giving his disciples – including all of us – a foretaste of the glory that is to come, so that we can have the strength to overcome the suffering that must come first.

The Apostles, of course, could not stay on the mountaintop forever – and neither can we. Following our Lord’s example, we must all be willing to take the long road to Calvary, to embrace the sacrifice of the Cross.

Nevertheless, no amount of toil, no amount of suffering can possibly diminish the inevitable joy of Christ’s Resurrection or the inexpressible glory of his radiance. “His dominion is an everlasting dominion ... , his kingship *shall not* be destroyed.”