

HOLY TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST
Matthew 17:1-9

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Anyone who reflects on life in this world will come to two images: light and darkness. In fact, the imagery of light and darkness exists in nearly all cultures. Light is connected with God Himself. St. John the Evangelist said that “God is light and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). The Lord said concerning Himself, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). Light is truth, goodness, and wisdom. In the light there is clear vision and everything can be seen for what they really are. Therefore, alongside light, there is also judgment. Darkness, on the other hand, is associated with evil, ignorance, sin, and death. Life cannot exist without light. In the Book of Genesis we read about creation. We are told that in the beginning there was darkness. God created the heavens and the earth, and the first words from the mouth of God were “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3).

In today's Gospel the Lord goes up on Mt. Tabor with Peter, James, and John and is transfigured, shining with the Divine light, what the Holy Fathers call “uncreated light,” for that which is Divine is uncreated, always was, and always existed. This Divine light is in the world, and it is a light that human beings can actually experience. In Greek the term *glory*, or *doxa* (δόξα) is the name for the Divine splendor, the magnificent light of God Himself, the light in which God dwells, the light that God Himself is. The disciples see this Divine light which is so overpowering that they fall down and have to cover their faces. This same Divine light shone so brightly from the face of Moses after his encounter with God in Exodus, that the people had to put a veil over his face because the people could not look at him (Exodus 34:29-35). The light emanating from the Lord on Mt. Tabor is dazzling and illumines the entire mountain, every stone and every blade of grass. There is a fullness of reality and communion with God. The light penetrates into the core of everything that it enlightens, and everything becomes translucent. The light quickens the potentialities and capabilities of all things.

We know that in this world there are two paths, the way of goodness which leads to God, and the way of evil, which leads to perdition. The path of goodness is an arduous path, and along the way we must carry our cross. The illumination which we received in Holy Baptism lights the way. Nonetheless, even though the way is clear and full of light, we sometimes stumble, because the devil never ceases to tempt us to leave our chosen path, and then we fall into darkness. Enjoying sin for a while in a false light which is imaginary and not real, don't we always eventually end up miserable and suffering in darkness, for the wages of sin is death, as St. Paul says (Romans 6:23)? When that happens, don't we remember, like the prodigal son, the happiness and peace we enjoyed while we walked in the Divine light of our heavenly Father? Thankfully, our heavenly Father is merciful, and while there is still breath in our mouth, there is always that Divine light shining at the end of the tunnel. Remember this well, brothers and sisters, when the devil tempts you to think that there is a better way — for his way is false and a lie. Never forget for a moment the deep and true love that we have in our hearts, which is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Holy Fathers, when speaking of the Divine light, actually name it Jesus. Whoever sees the Divine light is beholding Jesus Christ Himself.

In the language of the spiritual literature of the Church, the “world” means anything that is apart and separated from our Lord Jesus Christ. Even worse than that, it refers to those who actually *hate* the Lord and wage war against Him. It is anything and anyone who hates the light and prefers the darkness, who rejects the gift of sight and chooses to remain blind. We might wonder, “How can anyone reject sight and prefer to remain blind?” This is exactly, however, what it amounts to, when anyone chooses to reject the Lightgiver (Φωτοδότης), our Lord Jesus Christ. In John's gospel, after the Lord heals a blind man, He says, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind”

(John 9:39). The light comes into the world and illumines those who wish to see, but it judges those who prefer darkness. We Christians have a great calling. We are supposed to be ambassadors to the rest of the world of the light of Christ. Light is inseparable from love. To love God means to keep His commandments. If we walk in the light, then those around us will also see the light. Some will be attracted to it, and some will reject it and prefer the darkness. But if we do not remain faithful, if we forget our true love, if we do not struggle to keep the commandments of God, then the light dims and almost seems to be extinguished. May the light of Christ always shine brightly in each and every one of us! Amen!

