

# **THE LORD'S TRANSFIGURATION**

## **&**

### **THE EIGHTEENTH WEEK**

#### **IN ORDINARY TIME**

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- Sunday**    **Feast of the Lord's Transfiguration**  
**Aug. 6**    **Whose Transfiguration are we Celebrating?**  
              A reflection by Fr. Jean Carbon
- Mon**        **Monday of the Eighteenth Week of Ordinary Time**  
**7**            **Jesus Begins to Transform Us**  
              A reflection developed from a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant
- Tues**       **Memorial of St. Dominic**  
**8**            **God's Transforming Gift**  
              A reflection inspired by a text of St. Ephrem
- Wed**        **Memorial of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross**  
**9**            **The Truth Lived as Love**  
              A reflection beginning from a homily by St. Augustine
- Thurs**      **Feast of St. Lawrence the Deacon**  
**10**          **Shedding Our Blood for Love**  
              A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Bernard
- Fri**         **Memorial of St. Clare**  
**11**          **Why We Love Poverty**  
              A reflection built on a sermon by St. Pope Leo the Great
- Sat**         **Memorial of Our Lady**  
**12**          **The Joy that Fills Christian Living**  
              A reflection from Journeying with the Lord  
              by Carlo Cardinal Martini
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## **WHOSE TRANFIGURATION ARE WE CELEBRATING?**

**A reflection by Fr. Jean Carbon**

*“Jesus took Peter, James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. He was transfigured before their eyes; his face became as dazzling as the sun, his clothes as radiant as light.”* (Mt. 17:1ff) What is the meaning of this event? Why did the Holy One allow his beauty to be glimpsed? It was to teach his disciples, and that includes us.

First, no change was effected in Jesus’ reality but it was shown to us. Jesus manifests to all disciples what he really is and what all are invited to share by becoming “other Christs”. Jesus shows us who God called us to be when he called us to himself in Christ.

Second, we aren’t shown this truth just so we would share the knowledge of its reality but so we would share in life and salvation. Jesus reveals himself by giving himself and he does this in order to transform us into himself, so that we might give ourselves. Our reality is being revealed.

We are in a situation like that of Moses before the burning bush. Let’s take off the sandals that are curiosity and desire to understand and ask instead why this particular moment was chosen for this revelation. Recall that just a few days before the transfiguration Jesus had begun to lift the veil that hid the end of his life, and our life. He says all must suffer, be put to death and then be resurrected. Then he ascended the mountain to reveal the reality that would bring about in us. After coming down he again talked about death and rising. Jesus reveals God’s call to all who would be other Christs.

But what is Jesus’ Passover, about which he speaks with Moses and Elijah? It is commitment to the loving will of the Heavenly Father, no matter what that may require. Jesus tells us how we must prepare for our own Passover from this world to the Kingdom of Heaven. All disciples are invited to be present at Jesus’ ultimate struggle, just as were the three he took with him to his transfiguration. It is a call to an unconditional “Yes” to God and God’s love. We must enter into the mystery of unconditionally committed love if we are to understand transfiguration.

Mildly disturbing experiences can change people permanently. Think of what the Cross can do! Jesus, in this moment, has shown us the intensity of his gift of self and so utter union with the Heavenly Father. He becomes transparent to the light of Divine Love lived out even through the Cross. *“This is my Son, the Beloved, who enjoys my favor! Listen to him.”* Show you are listening by your life.

# **HOW GOD BEGINS TO TRANSFORM US**

**A reflection developed from a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant**

Think of all the references to eating in Scripture. What's more it is clear that eating is not just a matter of feeding oneself. Eating together is what is vital, and it begins the transfiguration which God plans to work in us personally. A family usually celebrates birthdays by a kind of banquet, and what goes on is much more than eating. A birthday is the celebration of the gift that each of us is to those we live with, and live for. Christians celebrate Jesus re-birthday each week by eating together. It isn't like picking up fast food at a drive-through window.

Ever since very ancient times to eat together has transformed people's relationships and so transformed them. Sharing food is a symbol of sharing mutual care and concern and a promise to continue caring for one another. Food sustains life and can obviously change it for those who share it. Jesus presents himself as our food and tells us that eating this food is the beginning of a new kind of life, and one that will never end or cease to unfold in new wonders and opportunities to love. Perhaps when you celebrate a child's birthday you think of the life-transforming changes a new birth brings.

You often think of how a child changes as the years pass and how the child's life unfolds into ever new and often surprising beauties and sufferings. But think how you were transformed by caring for the child. We are part of both changes. Your life unfolds as does that of your child. This is only a hint of what will happen as Jesus grows within us and as we care for the Jesus-life developing and unfolding in us.

Food is a blessing that the earth gives to all who dwell on it and are willing to do the world of cultivating and caring for it. Jesus compares us to good earth receiving the seed that is Jesus' word and, self and bearing wondrous fruits that are meant to be shared. We are a fruit of the earth that is to become a fruit in the garden of the Heavenly Paradise and bring endless delight to our God and to one another. Think of yourself as a delight for others. That doesn't mean you always please them but that you try always to be an opportunity for gratitude and for joy, no matter what happens.

Sharing the delight we experience from God, and pouring it out for one another, is a kind of communal ministry. The greatest need people have is for joy and gladness. We are a gift meant to bring others those gifts. We are reminded of this when we celebrate one another's birthday, and when we recall that we are other Christs for each other. So we let transformation continue in ourselves.

# **GOD'S TRANSFORMING GIFTS**

**A reflection inspired by a Gospel Commentary of St. Ephrem**

Consider how God's creative power penetrates everything everywhere. Our Lord showed this by many signs and wonders. He took a little bread and in the twinkling of an eye multiplied it. Work that might take us months to accomplish he did in a moment. His hands gave forth good things like the earth itself and his voice was like thunder which announces a life-giving rain; the movement of his lips was like dew and the breath of his mouth like sunlight. Many times he gave things of little value in themselves, a bit of bread or fish for instance, but as symbols of greater gifts.

One of the greater is the gift of prayer, taught us by personal example, which is really the only way prayer can be taught. By leading us to prayer Jesus leads us to his Heavenly Father and to all the other gifts culminating in that of resurrection and everlasting life in joy.

We celebrate the feast of St. Dominic whom God first led to prayer by calling him to be a Canon and to pray daily in praise and in petition for others. After learning prayer God called him to preach. After learning to preach God sent him to people who had wandered from the Gospel and Jesus into hatred of many of God's good gifts, most especially the gift of that love which produces a new life to live forever in delight before God. By his preaching Dominic called many back to the truth of Christ's preaching and so to the truth of life in God. Praying began it.

The Lord's words and deeds showed forth God's power and how swiftly God wants to grace us with new life and endless delight. God's word so delighted Dominic that he cared for little else. When he came to people who despised God's gift of a body and of the love of husband and wife he showed them that treasuring these gifts need not draw one from finding all one's treasure and hope in God. He denied himself more than they did, but not out of fear or hatred; he did it because he loved God so much more.

In celebrating his birth into the life of Heaven we celebrate the gift he was to those who hungered and thirsted for God but did not know how to find God. He teaches us by example that this too is our vocation. We are to draw others to God by showing what it is like to love God above all creatures, and yet to love creatures because of God. His delight in creation was really a delight in God's own beauty shared. Today we pray for the gift of seeing that beauty and sharing the joy in it which God would give us as a daily bread. It may seem a small thing but it brings us to what is greatest, God's very self.

# **THE TRUTH LIVED AS LOVE**

**A reflection introduced by a homily of St. Augustine**

***“God’s commandment is this, that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and that we love one another.”*** The fact is that nothing is enjoined on us except love of God and one another. ***“Whoever carries out this commandment abides in God and God in that person; and we can tell that we are dwelling in God by the Spirit that God has given us.”*** The work of the Spirit is to implant love and charity in human hearts. It is the source of any good work we do. If you find charity in yourself you have the Spirit of God in you to give you understanding.

**St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Edith Stein, came to faith in Christ by reading the writings of St. Teresa of Avila. When she paused and reflected on what she had read, according to her own account, she thought: This is the truth. She saw that truth as being lived by love of God and of her fellow human creatures. Edith was Jewish by birth and became a Jew wholly dedicated to Jesus in love for God and others. She had worked as a teacher but the Nazis made it impossible to continue. God led her further into love by calling her to contemplative life and Carmel. Love caused her to bring a younger sister with mental handicaps that prevented her from living on her own; the sister lived with the externs of the convent.**

**Love changed Edith to Teresa because Teresa had shown her the truth about Jesus the Christ. She became Benedicta because Benedict had shown her what contemplative monastic life means for love. She linked these realizations to the Cross, which she was determined to carry together with all Jews persecuted by the Nazis.**

**She and her sister were arrested, put in a box car, and sent to an extermination camp. During the days in the car she and her sister helped care for children separated from their parents. At the camp she led her sister into the gas chamber and helped her prepare to give her life to God in Christ. They died together and offered themselves to God’s love together. She gave to all, including us, an example of how contemplatives love neighbor in loving God.**

**She did all this quite deliberately because she believed she must not flee from death but unite herself with other Jewish as a holocaust to God. How is God calling us to live out this love? We must accept God’s gift of being the person we are, living in the times and the circumstances that are ours. We are to respond to everything as an invitation to love. This enables us to experience what contemplative living means and is ment to mean. The fundamental thing is to love no matter what happens.**

# **SHEDDING ONE'S BLOOD FOR LOVE**

**A reflection based on a letter by St. Bernard**

No one who loves God need have any doubt about God's love. God gladly returns the love He called forth. God loved us first and we have the pledge of God's love in the Spirit, as well as a faithful witness to it in Jesus. This is a double and irrefutable proof of God's love for each one of us. Christ died for us and deserves our love. The Spirit by its grace enables us to love as Christ does. Christ gives us the reason and the Spirit gives us the power. Jesus sets before us the example and the Spirit empowers us to love him and live his love.

Today we celebrate the love of St. Lawrence, a deacon, who loved even to the shedding of his blood in fulfillment of his vocation. A deacon is called by God to care for the poor and to embody the Church's charity toward them. He gave to the poor what he needed to save his life and because love for Christ and his poor required it.

How shameful it would be for us to see God's Son and the martyrs dying out of love and to refuse to live that same love in our vocation. We too possess a double token of salvation, the twofold outpouring of blood and Spirit. Neither is of any profit without the other. To say the Spirit gives us life is only another way of saying that the Spirit justifies us by rectifying our relationship with God. But who are the just? Aren't they the one who pay their debt of love to the God who loves them? It is impossible to do this unless you have received the Spirit's revelation of God's eternal plan for salvation in faith. That revelation is nothing other than an infusion of spiritual grace through which, as we mortify the works of mere flesh we prepare for a Kingdom flesh and blood can't possess.

We too have been called to the love of Christ and empowered to live it by the gift of the Spirit. In the Spirit we receive both the audacity to believe ourselves loved, and the power to love in return—so that God's love for us does not go unrequited. That is our right relationship to God. But it means pouring out our entire life in prayer and penance and the works of love for one another and for Christ's poor. Just as our works support our brethren they support the poor who turn to us for aid. This is only possible if we support one another in love by showing love to one another. We give thanks to God for the love shown us Jesus Christ and the Spirit by our prayer and our work. Both are deeds of love. We aid Christ's poor as much by our prayer as we do by our work and the same is true of our aid for one another. To celebrate the feast of a martyr is to celebrate every pouring out of life and blood for God and others in love.

# **WHY WE LOVE POVERTY**

**A reflection based on a sermon by St. Pope Leo the Great**

Let us exult with spiritual joy and rejoice before the Lord as we freely raise our eyes from all that fills the earth as far as Christ's dwelling place on high. Let no merely earthly desire weigh down minds that are summoned heavenward. Let no merely perishable thing encumber those predestined for what is everlasting. Let the love of God so fill us that we can make our way swiftly through all merely temporal things as pilgrims on this earth. We pass by the world's consolations because we are called to total dedication to God.

On whom do desires for the merely earthly weigh? On those whom the devil seeks to ensnare and prevent from walking the upward way. The Evil One wants to keep people in bondage to a desire for passing things, but they will have to give them up in any case. The devil wants us to do this in a way that robs us of our place in the Heaven's Kingdom, the one he himself lost by his fall. We must keep watch to see such plots and be ever careful to push away anything separating us from our God and God's love.

Nothing is more effective against the devil's wiles than love. It is a fact that nothing is as hostile to this love as attachment to money. The misdirected love for this human creation leads many to seek to depend on self for life and its goodness rather than turning to God. In the same way it stifles like a weed the love for neighbor to which Christ has called us. But one who doesn't love neighbor cannot have genuine love for God. If you want to avoid or root out a vice you practice the opposed virtue. If we are selfish then we must practice compassion for others and mercy. But mercy and compassion, and so love of neighbor, cannot exist in the heart which is filled with greed and the desire for money and more money. Who will show us how to overcome such desires and fix our hearts on pure love for God and neighbor? Who will help us make charity our aim? After all, no genuine virtue can flourish apart from charity or without it.

We have to walk the path Christ trod. This is how we ascend to God and take our place in his Kingdom. The renunciation of all goods is an integral part of the monastic vocation. But this has been lived to the full only by those who have made themselves wholly dependent on the charity of others. That is what St. Clare, whose feast we celebrate today, did. By depending totally on the charity of the Christians living near her convent she also drew them into the love and mercy of Christ. Blessed are those who trust God deeply enough to follow such a path.

# **THE JOY THAT FILLS CHRISTIAN LIFE**

A reflection from Journeying With the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

The mystery of Mary is one of exultation. Mary knows how to be joyful; she knows how to exult. This is made clear not only by her special prayer, the Magnificat, but by all the incidents we glimpse of her life. To be chosen by God is to be given the very best reasons for joy! Mary not only received but recognized and embraced an unending series of consolations in the Holy Spirit. It follows that we, as Church, must learn how to rejoice in the Spirit—if we don't already know how. The joy she experienced in God's gift defines how we are to be Church.

In the first place, we are called to be a Church which knows how to rejoice in the treasures of love God has shared with us. We are called to live in that joy and to live by joy. This is true even while we carry the weight of people's suffering and life's many preoccupations. Is it only my impression that we often come across as a Church disturbed, afraid, exhausted by our burdens and by the darkness of the times we live in? Does that mean we haven't learned to be what Mary was—joyful—and what she is always and invites us to be with her? Where is the joy in the gift of Jesus Christ which we have all received?

If we read the Acts of the Apostles we notice right away that true joy was the foundation of the Christian experience. Joy in the resurrection was dominant. So the Church is called to rejoice and exult in the fullness of God's gifts now. This is not only something for the future. But we have to do it with the humility that was Mary's. That needs to be true even when we join this joy with a share in sufferings, fears, tribulations and perhaps persecutions.

When we contemplate Mary in the New Testament we contemplate—and admire—the fundamental character of the Church as it is intended to exist for all time. We are a Church responding to the power of God manifested in God's Word.

Is that Word a word of joy? Is it a Word that transforms the experience of the Cross in resurrection joy? Resurrection is not just an event that once took place and then was over. Resurrection is a way of living that is intended to last forever, and that God causes to last forever in Jesus Christ and his holy ones. So we see that in Mary. It began when she conceived the Word and it found new strength in her Son's resurrection. Now it is perfect. It needs to find new life in us. Are you prepared to learn joy and exultation in Christ? Mary shows it to us.