

August 6

FOR THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

152.1 First Point

Jesus came upon this earth to make satisfaction for our sins,⁷²⁷ and was always considered as the man of sin by his Eternal Father, because he was burdened by the sins of the whole world,⁷²⁸ even though he himself never did and never could commit any sin. For that reason he remained on earth, was subject to all the sufferings of this life and to all the miseries which are the consequence of sin. Because of this he always appeared as an ordinary man and kept hidden from the rest of the world the glorious state his holy soul enjoyed, which his sacred humanity had a right to enjoy from the moment of his conception. He was even willing to be mocked, scorned, and insulted by those who did not live according to his teaching.

In fulfilling the obligation he had taken upon himself to satisfy for us the justice of his Father,⁷²⁹ he considered himself, according to the prophetic expression of David, the most despised of men, the outcast of the people,⁷³⁰ even though he was the King of glory.⁷³¹

We who were born in sin and have lived in sin must be conformable to Jesus Christ⁷³² in this life and suffer with him if we wish to have him for our head, to be one of his members, and to destroy sin in ourselves.⁷³³ As Saint Paul teaches us, neither afflictions, nor disappointments, neither hunger, nor nakedness, neither dangers, nor persecutions should be able to separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. If we are put to death for his sake, the same Apostle says, and if we are considered only as sheep destined for the slaughter, amidst all these evils we shall remain victorious,⁷³⁴ inspired by the example of him who has loved us so much and who delivered himself up to death for love of us.⁷³⁵

152.2 Second Point

Although the purpose which the Son of God set before himself on coming into this world was to suffer for us,⁷³⁶ he willed to show for a short time, as it were in passing, some rays of his glory to three of his apostles.⁷³⁷ With this in view, he led them to a solitary place on a high mountain.⁷³⁸ There he first gave himself to prayer and, while praying, was transfigured in their presence. His face became as bright as the sun, his garments all shining with light and as white as snow.⁷³⁹

Saint Peter, who was present at this mystery, giving testimony to what he had seen, says we ourselves were witnesses of the majesty of Jesus Christ, for he received from God the Father a testimonial to his honor and glory when we were together with him on the holy mountain.⁷⁴⁰ Moses and Elias also were there and joined with him to do him homage.⁷⁴¹

Because Jesus Christ always possessed this glory within himself, when he was transfigured, the change which appeared in him was only external. This is not the same with us. The change which must take place in us is interior; we must be entirely transformed by the light and the fulness of grace and by the possession of the Spirit of God. If later on there would follow some change in our exterior, this should come about only as an overflowing of the happiness we enjoy in the depths of our soul, because we will then be taken up with God alone and with what we should do for love of him.

152.3 Third Point

It was while he was in seclusion and during prayer that Jesus Christ was transfigured. The topic on which he conversed with Moses and Elias during his transfiguration was what would be accomplished in him during his passion and death, which he was going to suffer on a cross outside the city of Jerusalem,⁷⁴² as he desired. It was also while Jesus Christ was speaking about his sufferings and death that a luminous cloud appeared and covered him as well as Moses and Elias. From that cloud, where the glory of God appeared, a voice came forth which spoke these words: This is my beloved Son, listen to him.⁷⁴³ Relating what happened in this mystery, Saint Peter says that they heard this voice coming from heaven.⁷⁴⁴

All this should make us understand: (1) that it is only in seclusion and prayer that a soul can attain a true transfiguration, or rather transformation, of itself and be enlightened by God; and (2) when the soul is transfigured in this way with Jesus Christ, it must be willing to meditate on his Passion and cross, to show that all its desire is to become like Jesus Christ⁷⁴⁵ in his sufferings. For the Eternal Father will not recognize us as his well-beloved except insofar as we love suffering, give proof of this love by practice, and by daily living this spirit. We must remember these words of Jesus Christ, that we must bear our cross daily in order to be his disciples.⁷⁴⁶

This feast was extended to the Universal Church in 1457 by Pope Calixtus III to commemorate the victory of Saint John Capistrano over the Turks near Belgrade. It was earlier celebrated in the liturgy of the second Sunday of Lent.

727 1 Jn 3:5
728 2 Cor 5:21
729 Is 53:6; 2 Cor 5:21
730 Ps 22:7
731 Ps 24:7
732 Rom 8:29
733 Eph 4:15; 1 Cor 6:15

734 Rom 8:35-37
735 Eph 5:2
736 Heb 10:5-7
737 Mt 17:1-2
738 Mk 9:1
739 Lk 9:29
740 2 Pt 1:16-18

741 Mt 17:3
742 Lk 9:29-31
743 Mt 17:5
744 2 Pt 1:17-18
745 Rom 8:29
746 Lk 9:23