

Dear Brothers and Sister in Christ,

Summer seems to be flying by and, although we still have many weeks of warm weather ahead of us, some of our young students (and their teachers) have already begun to return to their classrooms. It is during August, this month of transition from summer schedules to school year schedules, that we celebrate two beautiful feasts: the feast of the Transfiguration of Christ and the feast of the Falling-Asleep of the Theotokos. Both feasts might, at first glance, seem very other-worldly and far beyond our comprehension. But each one of them opens for us and further explains for us the full meaning of the mystery of salvation, the gift that is given us through Christ. This month, instead of writing about either of these feasts or on some other topic, I would simply like to provide for you the text of a sermon for the Transfiguration that was given by the ever-memorable Archbishop Anthony of Sorouzh. It is my hope that these simple, yet profound words might enable all of us to enter more deeply into this great moment of the Lord's life:

The Feast of the Transfiguration opens the glory of God's Creation to us. On that day, Christ appeared before his disciples not only in the glory of the Father, in His Divine glory: The Gospels tell us that Divine light radiated from Christ's physical body and from the vestments covering Him, and also radiated from everything around Him.

Here we see something that had already been revealed to us in a shrouded manner in Christ's Incarnation. We are incapable of thinking of the Incarnation without being puzzled: how is it possible that human flesh, the matter of this world, assembled together in the Body of Christ, could have become not only the abode of the Living God, as could for example, a church, but could have united with the Divine in such a way that the flesh was penetrated with Divinity as well, and now is seated at the right hand of God the Father in eternal glory? Here, in a shrouded manner, is revealed to us all of the greatness, all of the significance not only of man, but of the material world itself, of its indescribable potential, not only earthly and transitory, but also eternal and Divine.

And on the day of the Transfiguration of the Lord, we see with what kind of light this, our material world, is called to shine forth, with what glory it is called to shine in the Kingdom of God, in the Lord's eternity... And if we attentively and seriously accept what is revealed to us here, we must change as profoundly as we can our attitude toward everything visible, toward everything tangible; not only toward humanity, not only toward man, but toward his very flesh, and not only toward human flesh, but toward everything around him that is physically perceptible, tangible, and visible... Everything is called to become the place of indwelling of the Lord's grace; everything is called to be at some time, at the end of time, drawn into that glory and to shine forth with that glory.

And it is granted unto us people to know that; it is granted unto us people not only to know that, but to be co-workers with God in the illuminating of that Creation which the Lord created... We perform the blessing of the fruits, the blessing of the waters, the blessing of the grains, the bread, we perform the blessing of bread and wine [changing them] into the Body and Blood of the Lord; the source of the miracles of Transfiguration and Theophany is within the confines of

the Church. Through human faith, the matter of this world is separated out, [matter which] though man's lack of faith, through human perfidy, had been handed over to corruption, death and destruction, is set apart by the miracle of Transfiguration and Theophany. Through our faith, it is separated from this corruption and death, and is given over to God Himself, is accepted by God, and in God fundamentally becomes a new creation.

However, this must spread far beyond the church building: without exception, all that is under man's control may be blessed by him. Everything on which we work, which we touch, all of the things in our life, everything can become part of the Kingdom of God, if that Kingdom of God is within us, and like Christ's radiance, spreads to everything we touch....

Let us think about this; we are not called to enslave nature, but rather to free it from the prison of corruption and death and sin, to free it and to bring it back into harmony with Kingdom of God. Therefore let us begin to treat all created matter, all of the visible world, thoughtfully, with respect, and let us be in [the world] Christ's co-workers, so that the world might achieve its glory and so that through us, all of creation might enter into the joy of the Lord. Amen.

With love in the Lord,

Father David