

2nd Sunday of Lent: Inward and Outward Transfiguration

Beloved in the Lord,

For the faithful Orthodox Christian, the events of Holy and Great Lent are many. From showing us our Orthodox Faith and how we should deal with the various heretics, to showing us the different people who prompt our return to God and virtue, to giving us strength from the Life-Giving Cross: all these emotions bring an eagerness and a willingness for a change of life. Man, from being a partner with sin, wants to change his lifestyle. He wants his state to change from one that is filled with sins, to a transfigured situation, a situation where he will change outwardly and inwardly. The Holy Evangelist, in today's Gospel, speaks about this outward and inward transfiguration.

Today's Gospel reading brings us all to Capernaum, where our Lord was at a home. Once the people found out, they ran to see Him, to hear Him, to live Him. The Evangelist tells us that so many people came, that they did not fit inside the house. The people that came did not only travel just because our Lord was a regular person that had "some nice words to say"; rather, the people traveled because the Lord was and is Holy by nature, and He is the only way for people to become holy and gain salvation. Only from the Lord is there salvation, because He is the Savior of the world.

Everyone that day wanted to experience a transfiguration. Yet, five people received this more powerful than everyone who was gathered there.

Five people came and approached the Lord, one of them being a paralytic. The paralytic had four friends who helped him to see the Lord. As they came to the house and saw it filled with people, they did not give up... they made the impossible *possible*. What did they do? They removed the roof off the house, and lowered their friend down at the point where Christ was. This action shows us the degree of their faith. Let's think for a moment now, how much faith these people had: to ruin a part of the room of a house, to lower down the paralytic where Christ was. Nothing would stop them from seeing the Lord. The transfiguration had already begun for these people.

The Lord saw the faith of the people and said to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven." Once the scribes heard this, the criticism began: "how can this Man say these things? Only God can forgive sins!" That was a time of transfiguration for the people that were present there, for them to see **Christ**: they confirmed that Christ is the True God, and they confirmed this belief with what their eyes saw and with what their ears heard – **Christ is truly God!** Yet, the scribes wanted to be blind to this Holy Revelation. They didn't want to be transfigured. How many times God gives each and every one of us the opportunity, that we see His wonders every day, and we say, "God didn't do this... only people can change lives." We are blind to His Holy Economy, blind to His Will, blind to His Revelation.

Yet, God (who is perfect and limitless love) did not stop there. The transfiguration was not complete for the Jews gathered there. Jesus reprimanded them and said, "Why do you think this way? Is it easier for Me to say to the paralytic, 'your sins are forgiven', or to command him to get up from his bed and walk?" With this, the Lord commands the paralytic to get up. The paralytic, who needed 4 people to assist him, immediately got up and walked by himself! He was cured!

If today's Gospel reading teaches us something, it is the following: the transfiguration of each and every person is not only accomplished outwardly, for the entire world to see. The transfiguration is first accomplished within the soul of each person. When we hear the words of the Lord, when we hear of His mercy, when we hear of His *agape*, and when we **accept these gifts**, we are *transfigured*, and from sinners we become righteous, we become saints.

The paralytic's life changed the same day of his recovery, along with the lives of those who were present there. Not only was he transfigured outwardly, but was transfigured inwardly. He realized that God loved him, and would never abandon His creation. Today, we will see our Lord, Redeemer and Savior, in front of our own eyes. As the Holy Chalice comes out of the Beautiful Gate, as Christ knocks on the door of our soul, we have the choice: will we be like those four friends and the paralytic, who want to be transfigured? Or, will we be like the faithless scribes, who did not accept that transfiguration?

Yet, some will ask: "How can I accept this transfiguration?" It is so simple, yet so difficult for some: When our Lord is not just a *part* of our lives, **but** the Lord becomes **the centre of our lives!** When our Lord is our example. When we charitably give, we forgive and we obey His will. When we see our fellow human being not as just a "separate person", but as an *icon of God!* When we fast not only "the food fast", but we fast with love to God and with humility. When we ask for forgiveness with tears of repentance and confession. **Then will our transfiguration be not only for the "eyes of the world", but a true transfiguration, blessed by God!**

The Lord waits for us with "open arms" and waits for us to accept our transfiguration. Only with faith and our desire to change our lives for the better, in accordance with the commands of God, can we move forward. May we all accept that heavenly call, so we can hear in the depths of our soul that wonderful blessing, "O good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord."

May it be so.