

Did you know . . .

The Transfiguration of The Lord

Tuesday we will celebrate the Transfiguration of the Lord. This feast became widespread in the West in the 11th century and was introduced into the Roman calendar in 1457 to commemorate the victory over Islam in Belgrade.

About a year before His Passion, Our Lord, while in Galilee, took St. Peter, Sts. James and John, and led them to a retired mountain. Tradition assures us it was Mt. Tabor, which is exceeding high and beautiful, fruitful and covered with green trees and shrubs, with breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside. It became a pilgrimage site as early as the fourth century.

Religious scholars believe the timing of the Transfiguration occurred around the time of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, "a fall harvest festival that commemorated God's presence with and care for the Israelites during their journey in the wilderness after the Exodus." [Lectio: Peter]. The festival lasted 8 days and the Transfiguration may have taken place on the final and greatest day of Tabernacles, since Luke's gospel refers to the "eight days." [Lk 9:28]

"In the Transfiguration, Christ enjoyed for a short while that glorified state which was to be permanently His after His Resurrection on Easter Sunday. The splendor of His inward Divinity and of the Beatific Vision of His soul overflowed on His body, and permeated His garments so that Christ stood before Peter, James, and John in a snow-white brightness. The purpose of the Transfiguration was to encourage and strengthen the Apostles who were depressed by their Master's prediction of His own Passion and Death." [Rt. Rev. Msgr. Rudolph G. Bandas]

The Transfiguration not only supports the identity of Jesus as the Son of God, but the words "listen to him", identifies him as the messenger and voice of God. The presence of Elijah and Moses indicates to the apostles that Jesus is the voice of God "par excellence", and He should be listened to, surpassing the laws of Moses. At the Transfiguration, God assigns to Jesus a special "honor and glory" and it is the turning point at which God exalts Jesus above all other powers in creation, and positions him as ruler and judge. [2 Peter 1:16–18]

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