Editor's Note: In honor of today's feast, we offer readers the following meditation from *Divine Intimacy*, a classic volume of Carmelite spirituality aligned to the liturgical year by Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D. (1893-1953). Fr. Gabriel's meditation on the Transfiguration is found in *Divine Intimacy* on the Second Sunday of Lent, whose Gospel likewise covers the sacred event in the life of Our Lord. May this text inspire us all to make good use of the consolations Our Lord sends us at times in order to prepare ourselves to participate more fruitfully in His redemptive sufferings.

105. The Transfiguration

By Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D.

(1) The soul of Jesus, personally united to the Word, enjoyed the Beatific Vision, which has as its connatural effect the glorification of the body. But this effect was impeded by Jesus, Who, during the years of His life on earth, wanted to resemble us as much as possible by appearing "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3). However, in order to confirm the faith of the Apostles who were shaken by the announcement of His Passion, Jesus permitted some rays from His blessed soul to shine forth for a few brief instants on Thabor, when Peter, James, and John saw Him transfigured: "His face did shine as the sun and His garments became white as snow." The three were enraptured by it, and yet Jesus revealed to them only one ray of His glory, for no human creature could have borne the complete vision.

Glory is the fruit of grace: the grace possessed by Jesus in an infinite degree is reflected in an infinite glory transfiguring Him entirely. Something similar happens to us: grace will transform us "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18), until one day it will bring us to the Beatific Vision of God in heaven. But while grace transfigures us, sin, on the other hand, darkens and disfigures whoever becomes its victim.

Today's Gospel (Matt. 17:1-9) brings out the close connection between the Transfiguration and the Passion of Jesus. Moses and Elias appeared on Thabor on either side of the Savior. They conversed with Him, and as St. Luke explains, talked specifically about His coming Passion: "They spoke of His decease, that He should accomplish in Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31).

The divine Master wished to teach His disciples in this way that it was impossible—for Him as well as for them—to reach the glory of the Transfiguration without passing through suffering. It was the same lesson that He would give later to the two disciples at Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:26). What has been disfigured by sin cannot regain its original supernatural beauty except by way of purifying suffering.

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(2) In ecstasy before the vision on Thabor, Peter cried out with his usual eagerness, “It is good for us to be here,” and offered to make three tabernacles: one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elias. But his proposal was interrupted by a voice from heaven: “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him!” and the vision disappeared.

Spiritual consolations are never an end in themselves, and we should neither desire them nor try to retain them for our own satisfaction. Joy, even that which is spiritual, should never be sought for itself. Just as in heaven, joy will be the necessary concomitant of possessing God, so too on earth, it should be nothing but a means, enabling us to give ourselves with greater generosity to the service of God. To Peter, who wanted to stay on Thabor in the sweet vision of the transfigured Jesus, God Himself replied by inviting him to listen to and follow the teachings of His beloved Son. The ardent Apostle would soon learn that following Jesus meant carrying the Cross and ascending Calvary with Him.

God does not console us for our entertainment but rather for our encouragement, for our strengthening, for the increase of our generosity in suffering for love of Him.

The vision disappeared; the Apostles raised their eyes and saw nothing “*nisi solum Jesum*,” save Jesus alone, and with “Jesus alone,” they came down from the mountain. This is what we must always seek and it must be sufficient for us: Jesus alone, God alone. Everything else—consolations, helps, friendships (even spiritual ones), understanding, esteem, encouragement (even from Superiors)—may be good to the extent that God permits us to enjoy them. He very often makes use of them to encourage us in our weakness; but if, through certain circumstances, His divine hand takes all these things away, we should not be upset or disturbed. It is precisely at such times that we can prove to God more than ever—by deeds and not by words only—that He is our *All* and that *He alone suffices*. On these occasions the loving soul finds itself in a position to give God one of the finest proofs of its love: to be faithful to Him, to trust in Him, and to persevere in its resolution to give all, even if, by removing His gifts, He has left it alone. The soul may be in darkness, that is, subject to misunderstanding, bitterness, material and spiritual solitude combined with interior desolation. The time has come to repeat, “Jesus alone,” to come down from Thabor with Him, and to follow Him with the Apostles even to Calvary, where He will suffer, abandoned not only by men, but even by His Father.

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