



JESUS CHRIST

His Transfiguration and Ascent to Jerusalem

Texts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Jesus prophesies his death

From the day Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Master ‘began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things...and be killed, and on the third day be raised.’ (Mt 16:21) Peter scorns this prediction, nor do the others understand it any better than he.

This is my Son...listen to him!

In this context the mysterious episode of Jesus’ Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain, before three witnesses chosen by himself: Peter, James and John.

Jesus’ face and clothes become dazzling with light, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking ‘of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem’. (Lk 9:31)

A cloud covers him and a voice from heaven says: ‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!’ (Lk 9:35) (554)

Jesus’ divine glory - the whole Trinity appeared

For a moment Jesus discloses his divine glory, confirming Peter’s confession. He also reveals that he will have to go by the way of the cross at Jerusalem in order to ‘enter into his glory’. (Lk 24:26)

Moses and Elijah had seen God’s glory on the Mountain; the Law and the Prophets had announced the Messiah’s sufferings.

Christ’s Passion is the will of the Father: the Son acts as God’s servant; the cloud indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit. ‘The whole Trinity appeared: the Father in the voice; the Son in the man; the Spirit in the shining cloud.’ (St Thomas Aquinas)

“You were transfigured on the mountain, and your disciples, as much as they were capable of it, beheld your glory, O Christ our God, so that when they should see you crucified they would understand that your Passion was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that you truly are the splendour of the Father.” (Byzantine Liturgy) (555)

The meaning of the Transfiguration - a foretaste of Christ’s glory

On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration.

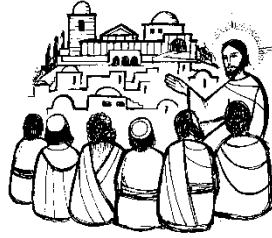
Jesus’ baptism proclaimed the ‘mystery of the first regeneration’, namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration ‘is the sacrament of the second regeneration’: our own Resurrection. From now on we share in the Lord’s Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ.

The Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ’s glorious coming, when he ‘will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body.’ (Phil 3:21) But it also recalls that ‘it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God’ (Acts 14:22):

“Peter did not understand this when he wanted to remain with Christ on the mountain. It has been reserved for you, Peter, but for after death. For now, Jesus says: ‘Go down to toil on earth, to serve on earth, to be scorned and crucified on earth. Life goes down to be killed; Bread goes down to suffer hunger; the Way goes down to be exhausted on his journey; the Spring goes down to suffer thirst; and you refuse to suffer?’” (St Augustine) (556)

IN BRIEF

- **Christ’s Transfiguration aims at strengthening the apostles’ faith in anticipation of his Passion: the ascent on to the ‘high mountain’ prepares for the ascent to Calvary. Christ, head of the Church, manifests what his Body contains and radiates in the sacraments: ‘the hope of glory’ (Col 1:27) (568)**



JESUS' ASCENT TO JERUSALEM

Jesus announces his Passion and Resurrection

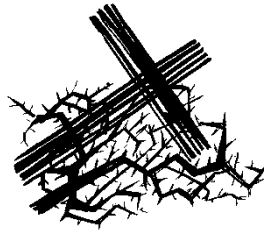
'When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem.' (Lk 9:51) By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: 'It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.' (Lk 15:33) (557)

Jesus weeps over the holy city

Jesus recalls the martyrdom of the prophets who had been put to death in Jerusalem. Nevertheless he persists in calling Jerusalem to gather around him: 'How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!' (Mt 23: 37) When Jerusalem comes into view he weeps over her and expresses once again his heart's desire: 'Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes.' (Lk 19: 41-42) (558)

IN BRIEF

- **Jesus went up to Jerusalem voluntarily, knowing well that there he would die a violent death because of the opposition of sinners (cf. Heb 12:3) (569)**



JESUS' MESSIANIC ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'

How will Jerusalem welcome her Messiah? Although Jesus had always refused popular attempts to make him king, he chooses the time and prepares the details for his messianic entry into the city of 'his father David'.

Acclaimed as son of David, as the one who brings salvation (*Hosanna* means 'Save!' or 'Give Salvation!'), the 'King of glory' enters his City 'riding on an ass'.

Jesus conquers the Daughter of Zion, a figure of his Church, neither by ruse nor by violence, but by the humility that bears witness to the truth.

And so the subjects of his kingdom on that day are children and God's poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds.

Their acclamation, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord', is taken up by the Church in the *Sanctus* [the *Holy, Holy, Holy*] of the Eucharistic liturgy that introduces the memorial of the Lord's Passover. (559)

Palm Sunday

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem manifested the coming of the kingdom that the King-Messiah was going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection. It is with the celebration of that entry on Palm Sunday that the Church's liturgy solemnly opens Holy Week. (560)

IN BRIEF

- **Jesus' entry into Jerusalem manifests the coming of the kingdom that the Messiah-King, welcomed into his city by children and the humble of heart, is going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection. (570)**