

*Pastoral reflection, Fr John March 2023:* On August 6, we celebrate the joyous feast of the Transfiguration of Christ in which the uncreated light and glory of His divinity was manifest to the disciples. This event points to the “splendor of the resurrection” and the “beauty of the divine kingdom” (St John Chrysostom). For St. Dionysius the Areopagite and other Fathers, this fore-shadows how we will be transformed to be filled with the glory divine light of God, “we shall be equal to the angels and will be sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Luke 29:36). Christ’s transfiguration takes place forty days before his passion and death. It also shows the “glory of the Cross” (St John Chrysostom)

So, bearing Christ’s transfiguration in mind is also fitting for our Lenten journey. Recall, that Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, is the messiah foretold in the Old Testament – the Suffering Servant, “despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Yet, “He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Is 53:3-4). On Mount Tabor, the uncreated light of His divinity that transfigures Him in his humanity manifests the compassion, mercy, and love that shapes His journey among us. He is transfigured in His humility and complete acceptance of the weakness and vulnerability of our lives.

During our Lenten Journey, we should take up our cross in humility, repentance, and service to follow Christ, our Suffering Servant, as we approach his passion and death. That is our way to partake of the “Light of Christ that illumines all” (Presanctified Liturgy) and, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, to partake of and reflect in our own lives, the love, mercy, and compassion of Christ. Prepare yourself as best you can to stand with the Theotokos at the foot of the Cross, rather than abandon Him or betray Him. Given the addictive qualities of our sins, always confess and ask for forgiveness as you tend to abandon or betray Him.

During your journey through Lent, always remember to say the prayer of St. Ephrem:

“O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of idleness, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Your servant.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother and sister, for blessed art You, unto ages of ages. Amen.”

Always call upon the Theotokos with this ancient prayer to her:

“Beneath your compassion we take refuge, O Theotokos: despise not our petitions in distress:  
but deliver us from peril, for you alone are pure and alone blessed.”

(Fr John D. Jones, Priest-in-Charge, Holy Theophany Church – A Mission of the OCA)