

February 21, 2016 Light from Light Homily:

Brothers and Sisters, Brother Leo was a close companion of St. Francis of Assisi and one of the original members of his small religious community. Leo held Francis in the highest esteem, and considered him a man of outstanding holiness. Once Leo hoped to observe unnoticed how St. Francis prayed. So he hid himself in the chapel where the holy man prayed. He saw that Francis passed long hours with his face and hands raised toward heaven. He repeated over and over again the words. "Who are you, my sweet Lord? Who am I? I am only a vile worm and a useless servant." Seeing Francis pray had a decisive influence on Leo's life. The powerful experience transformed his life. The image of a saint praying left a lasting impression on him and his faith!

In today's gospel, St. Luke emphasizes that Jesus went up the mountain to pray. And it was while he prayed that the mystery of the Transfiguration occurred. Jesus shines from within. He does not simply receive light, but he himself is Light from Light! The Transfiguration, one of the Luminous Mysteries, is a direct result of Jesus' prayer to his Heavenly father. And it wasn't the first time! In St. Luke's account of the baptism of Christ we read the following: "After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized AND WAS PRAYING, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a Dove." (Lk. 3:21)

For the three Apostles who were privileged witnesses to the Transfiguration event, going up the mountain meant being involved in the prayer of Jesus. For the three men it was a moment of grace. They beheld his glory. They were given a foretaste of the resurrection. It is not without significance that we will see these men again on the Mount of Olives during Jesus' agony in the garden.

In his finely written book, ["The Mystery of the Transfiguration"](#), Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, writes, "In all the Gospel's there is not one image or scene that is more compelling than that of Jesus praying to the Father...whether it is evening or night or early dawn when it is still dark, on a mountain or on the shore of a lake. This is a striking image that has the power to attract the mind and heart, to catalyze our thoughts and desires. It enralls us".

Dear friends, have you ever been deeply moved by the sight of one praying? Were you transformed by the experience?

A personal story: When I was in my early teen years, I had an unforgettable experience. Standing outside my parents' bedroom door one evening, I heard the sound of someone whispering. For a reason unknown to me, the door was slightly ajar. Overcome by curiosity, I peeked inside the room. I discovered my father kneeling at the side of his bed and offering his evening prayers. For several moments I was transfixed and could not move. Who knows? The experience may have been one factor leading me to the pursuit of the Catholic priesthood!

Another anecdote, the French journalist and convert to the Catholic faith, Andre Frossard, was once invited to a Mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II in the Papal Chapel. The Pope prayed slowly, deliberately and intensely. In the words of the renowned journalist and author, who was a witness to the event, "I entered another dimension, outside time." The experience gave him a much deeper appreciation of the splendor and beauty of liturgical prayer.

Bear in mind that what happened to Christ (during the Transfiguration) also happens to us whenever we receive the resurrected Christ in the Eucharist. By receiving Christ we allow the Grace of God to fill us with his light .We, too, are given a foretaste of our own resurrection! Thanks be to God.

Amen!