



DAY #38: Contemplation

THE TRANSFIGURATION [284]

Today's meditation will focus on the Transfiguration of Jesus. Let us begin – as always – with a prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.
O God, who has enlightened the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us to taste
what is right according to the same Spirit and to enjoy always His heavenly consolations.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

As with all of our meditations, we will follow the below structure:

- 1 – Place oneself in the presence of God [75]
- 2 – Preparatory Prayer (asking God for grace; [46])
- 3 – Composition of Place (a sensible image in imagination related to the meditation at hand)
- 4 – History (this applies more to ‘contemplations’ on the life and mysteries of Christ. Often this will come directly from Sacred Scripture)
- 5 – Petition (the specific grace we are asking for in a particular spiritual exercises)
- 6 – the “Points” (the substance of the meditation)
- 7 – the Colloquy (our conversation with God, Christ, and Mary, depending on the meditation)
- 8 – Examination (after our meditation, sometime can be devoted to seeing how we were in the time of prayer).

It's always good to remember to both follow the path of prayer, but also to be open to inspirations of the Holy Spirit. One meditation, we may spend a bit more time on one section than other. The ‘structure’ is meant to help us pray, that is, talk with God.

First, PLACE ONESELF IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD:

*[75] - I will stand for the space of an **Our Father**, a step or two before the place where I am to meditate or contemplate, and with my mind raised on high, consider that God our Lord beholds me, etc. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility.*

PREPARATORY PRAYER [46] – *The preparatory prayer is to ask grace from God our Lord, that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be purely ordered in the service and praise of His divine majesty.*

Preludes

1 – **HISTORY** – After feeding the five thousand at the Sea of Galilee, our Lord next “walked on the sea”, to His apostles, Peter walked on water and fell in, and the apostles cried out that He was the Son of God. Our Lord gave the Bread of Life discourse, and many of His followers left Him. This marked a big moment in Christ's ministry, we could say the end of a chapter. They kept moving, going to the north to the Decapolis (Greek cities), before the solemn declaration of Christ as the Son of God (who do you say that I am?) Christ declared Peter's role as “rock”. Immediately, Christ then talks of His death and resurrection, Peter resists, and Christ tells Him to “get behind me Satan, you are an obstacle to me”. And now a week later, our Lord tells Moses and Elijah on the Mountain of Tabor.

St. Ignatius gives three points to consider in point 284:

The Transfiguration [284] St. Matthew 17, 1–9 (Mk 9:2-13; Lk 9:28-36)

First Point - *Jesus took with Him His beloved disciples, Peter, James, and John, and He was transfigured before them. His face became resplendent as the sun, and His garments like snow.*

Second Point - *He spoke with Moses and Elijah.*

Third Point - *When St. Peter said that they should build three tabernacles, a voice was heard from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son. . . . Hear ye him.” When the disciples heard this voice, they fell down for fear, their faces to the ground. Jesus came and touched them, and said to them, “Arise and fear not. . . . Tell not the vision to any one till the Son of Man be risen from the dead.”*

2 – **COMPOSITION OF PLACE** []: Mt. Tabor is a large mountain, nearly 1800 feet high above the Jezreel Valley in northern Israel, about 5 miles east of Nazareth and 10 or so miles south west of the north of the Sea of Galilee. It arise suddenly – like a dome – in the middle of a flat plain.

We can imagine Mount Tabor; it is not a very high mountain, barely reaching 600 meters. From a distance, it looks more like a small hill than a mountain; it can be distinguished well because there are no other elevations around it.

****3 – Grace: here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the Lord, who for me became man (who for me was transfigured), so that I may love Him more and follow Him.**

Let us consider some of the text from the Gospel Passages of Matthew and Luke; they each point out some distinctive details:

ST. MATTHEW 17	ST. LUKE 9
<p>17 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves.</p> <p>² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became <u>dazzling white</u>. ³ Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.</p> <p>⁴ Then Peter said to Jesus, “<u>Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings^[b] here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.</u>”</p> <p>⁵ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”</p>	<p>²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus^[1] took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And <u>while he was praying</u>, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became <u>dazzling white</u>. ³⁰ Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹ They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.</p> <p>³² Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake,^[2] they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³ Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,^[2] one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said.</p> <p>³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”</p>

<p>⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” ⁸And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.</p> <p>⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” (Mt 17:1-9)</p>	<p>³⁶When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.</p> <p>And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen. (Lk 9:28-36)</p>
---	--

This episode clearly struck these three chosen witnesses, with St. Peter writing later:

¹⁷For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, my Beloved,^[d] with whom I am well pleased.” ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain (2 Pet 1:17-18)

And St. John:

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son,^[d] full of grace and truth. (Jn 1:14)

Contemplation: As always, we ought to **see** who is there (picture), **listen** to what they say (radio), and **watch** what they do (movie).

Who is there? Jesus, Peter, James, John, Moses and Elijah.

POINTS FOR MEDITATION

Point 1 – Why the mountain?

Consider how Christ withdrew three of His disciples to the solitude of a mountain to show them the glory of His transfiguration, because He does not reveal His most secret mysteries except to those who withdraw from the noise of men and the affairs of the world to the solitude and quiet of the heart.

Let us learn to withdraw from all earthly things if we want to enjoy with Christ all that is divine.

Let us ascend Mount Tabor ourselves, in the company of Christ and His three disciples, and contemplate what happens there. Let us remember that contemplation is to apply the senses. St. Ignatius says: to listen, to look, and to see: **to listen to what the characters say; to look at how they are, their feelings, their faces, their expressions;** and to see what they do, how they do it, with what gestures.

Now apply your senses to this passage of Our Lord's life. Each one can dwell on the things that most attract their attention. Remember that the goal is to reach the Colloquy. Contemplation is a means that must help me reach the colloquy. Therefore, if when I begin to apply the senses, I already begin that dialogue with Our Lord, it is fine. Do not abandon that dialogue to continue the contemplation.

As an aid, I will mention some things. For example: Look how in the **solitude** of the summit, surely in the evening so it is not too hot, in that solitude, in that silence, look how the four characters are praying, in great silence. And suddenly, the face of Christ begins to shine like the sun, and His garments become whiter than snow, and two figures appear, one on each side of Christ; they are Moses and Elijah, also with all majesty and grandeur.

Let us apply the senses to everything that happens there: let us look at the glory of Christ, and let us listen to what Moses and Elijah are saying; what St. Peter says, who asks that they stay there, and above all the voice of the Father who says: *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to Him."*

Point 2: Solitude & Prayer

The sacred Evangelist says that as He **prayed**, He was transfigured and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as snow. From this we can understand the **power of prayer**, because in colloquies with God, the sinful man is changed into a saint, and from carnal into spiritual. He shines with the light of good example, and attains the whiteness and warmth of his soul.

Prayer is such an important part of our Christian life, this dialogue with God. Let us consider some things to help us pray:

Three Dispositions for Prayer

1. Humility

- a. The Holy Spirit tells us through St. James, *"God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble."* (Jas 4:6; Prv 3:34)
- b. The Psalmist cries: *"If the Lord had not been my help, my soul would soon have dwelt in the land of silence [hell]"*. (Ps 94:17)
- c. St. Francis of Assisi said he was the greatest sinner in the world saying, *"if God did not keep his hand over me, I should commit every possible sin"*
- d. Or St. Thérèse: *"I know that without Him, I could have fallen as low as St. Mary Magdalene."*
- e. *"God, I thank you that I am not like other men I do (this and that) ..."* vs. *"God, be merciful to me a sinner!"* (cf. Luke 18:9-14)

2. Confidence

- a. We can think of the message of Divine Mercy: *"Jesus I trust in You"*. Jesus says to St. Faustina: *"Your great trust in Me forces Me to continuously grant you graces.* (St. Faustina, *Diary*, pt 718 (Jesus speaking))
- b. Recall Peter at the last supper – *"I will never leave you"*.

3. Perseverance

- a. more important to our spiritual life than breathing is to natural life
- b. St. John Paul II, despite his busy schedule said the Pope's first duty is to pray.

In St. Faustina's *Diary* she writes:

Today, the Lord said to me, **My daughter, I am told that there is much simplicity in you, so why do you not tell Me about everything that concerns you, even the smallest details? Tell Me about everything, and know that this will give Me great joy.** I answered, "But You know about everything, Lord." **And Jesus replied to me, Yes, I do know; but you should not excuse yourself**

with the fact that I know, but with childlike simplicity talk to Me about everything, for My ears and heart are inclined towards you, and your words are dear to Me.¹

Point 3 – Faith & Consolations

We can consider the reason why Christ was transfigured. And as the Evangelist tells us, it was because, earlier, He had prophesied the Passion to them (cf. Peter's profession in Mt 16, followed by the promise of the cross), and so that their **faith would not fail**, nor would they consider Him a mere man upon seeing Him suffer and die, now He showed them His Glory.

Let us see how important **faith** is, which is the foundation of holiness. And how much the Lord desires that we be rooted in it, since He showed them His Glory with such sublime means, and does not hesitate to open the Heavens and bestow upon us His treasures so that we lack no reasons to believe, even when we do not understand, even when it is hard because we are suffering. Our Lord always gives us sufficient reasons to believe. Our main reason is that He is God; our faith is based on God, who became man because He loves us and wants to free us from the slavery of sin.

Therefore, let us nourish that **faith** in Christ Our Lord.

We read in the letter to the Hebrews: "*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*" (Heb 11:1)

See our Lord also comforting His apostles with this **consolation**.

When St. Peter said that they should build three tabernacles, a voice was heard from heaven, saying, "***This is my Son, the Beloved;^{el} with him I am well pleased; listen to him!***" When the disciples heard this voice, they fell down for fear, their faces to the ground. Jesus came and touched them, and said to them, "***Get up and do not be afraid.*** *Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.*

We have heard this voice before at the Baptism, but here we face three new words: "listen to Him". This command solidifies Jesus' authority as a teacher. And why is He credible? Because He has seen the Father: ¹⁸*No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.* (Jn 1:18)

Consider the cry of Peter: *Lord, it is good for us to be here* – What a **joyful** prayer! Yes, Peter has been sleeping. He has not been perfect in the spiritual exercises. Yet, somehow, he is able to glimpse this great moment, the glory of Christ. We too should rejoice in these moments in the exercises. To not crush ourselves with high expectations. Yes, we must seek to work: to choose what is **more**, to seek to enter the third class of men, and then, if God wills, the third kind of humility. We should do the little things, preparatory prayer, place ourself in the presence of God, our examination each day (at lunch and before bed). But also, to have great trust in the Lord. To be grateful to be here for these exercises.

Consider the Israelites in the desert for 40 years (cf. Exodus – Deuteronomy) – the ups and down, the weaknesses, the constant failures, the snakes, etc. Yet, it was this special time, where they were so

¹ *Diary*, 921 (276) February 6, [1937]. (kindle)

close to the Lord. When we go back down the mountain, to the world to the noise, we can still pray, but almost never like we can in the time of *Spiritual Exercises*. Almost never in a way where we will “experience God” so much in the highs and lows.

What is eternal life? Our Lord will say in His high priestly prayer: *And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* (Jn 17:3) What is prayer? It is to know Christ by faith, in faith. And so – even though we rarely ‘experience it’; whenever we pray, we are in a sense ‘in heaven’. We are experiencing God – as though in a mirror – but in anticipation of that moment where it will be face to face, as a man knows a friend, distinctly. We will know, as we are known. And so with Peter, let us also rejoice, “Lord, it is good for us to be here”.

Colloquy:

To conclude, we make the Colloquy. You can do it as you wish. What is important is to do it. One way could be to first address the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, to speak with her and ask her for what we have discovered in this meditation. We finish with an *Hail Mary*.

Then to the Son, the same. And we finish with the prayer *Soul of Christ*.

And finally to the Father, finishing with an *Our Father*.

May God bless you.