*A Homily delivered on the Saturday before the Second Sunday in Lent — on the Transfiguration, S.* [Matthew 17:1-13](http://www.newadvent.org/bible/mat017.htm#verse1)

**I. Peter's confession shown to lead up to the Transfiguration**

The [Gospel](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06655b.htm) lesson, dearly-beloved, which has reached the inner hearing of our minds through our bodily ears, calls us to the understanding of a great [mystery](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10662a.htm), to which we shall by the help of God's [grace](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06689a.htm) the better attain, if we turn our attention to what is narrated just before\*.

The Saviour of [mankind](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm), [Jesus Christ](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374c.htm), in founding that [faith](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm), which recalls the [wicked](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm) to righteousness and the dead to life, used to instruct His [disciples](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05029a.htm) by admonitory teaching and by miraculous acts to the end that He, the [Christ](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10212c.htm), might be [believed](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm) to be at once the Only-begotten of [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) and the [Son of Man](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14144a.htm). For the one without the other was of no avail to [salvation](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13407a.htm), and it was equally dangerous to have [believed](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm) the [Lord Jesus Christ](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374c.htm) to be either only God without manhood, or only man without Godhead , since both had equally to be confessed, because just as [true](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) manhood [existed](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm) in His Godhead, so [true](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) Godhead [existed](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm) in His Manhood. To strengthen, therefore, their most wholesome [knowledge](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm) of this belief, the Lord had asked His [disciples](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05029a.htm), among the various opinions of others, what they themselves [believed](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm), or thought about Him: whereat the Apostle Peter, by the revelation of the most High Father passing beyond things corporeal and surmounting things [human](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm) by the eyes of his [mind](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10321a.htm), saw Him to be Son of the living [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), and acknowledged the [glory](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm) of the Godhead, because he looked not at the substance of His flesh and blood alone; and with this lofty [faith](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm) Christ was so well pleased that he received the fullness of blessing, and was endued with the [holy](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07386a.htm) firmness of the inviolable Rock on which the [Church](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm) should be built and conquer the gates of [hell](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07207a.htm) and the [laws](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09053a.htm) of death, so that, in loosing or binding the petitions of any whatsoever, only that should be ratified in heaven which had been settled by the judgment of Peter.

**II. The same continued**

But this exalted and highly-praised understanding, dearly-beloved, had also to be instructed on the [mystery](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10662a.htm) of [Christ's](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374c.htm) lower substance, lest the Apostle's [faith](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm), being raised to the [glory](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm) of confessing the Deity in [Christ](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374c.htm), should deem the reception of our weakness unworthy of the impassible [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), and incongruous, and should [believe](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm) the [human](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm) [nature](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10715a.htm) to be so [glorified](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm) in Him as to be incapable of suffering punishment, or being dissolved in death. And, therefore, when the Lord said that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and [scribes](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13634a.htm) and chief of the [priests](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12406a.htm), and the third day rise again, the blessed Peter who, being illumined with light from above, was burning with the heat of his confession, rejected their mocking insults and the disgrace of the most cruel death, with, as he thought, a loyal and outspoken contempt, but was checked by a kindly rebuke from Jesus and animated with the desire to share His [suffering](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11530a.htm). For the Saviour's exhortation that followed, instilled and taught this, that they who wished to follow Him should deny themselves, and count the loss of temporal things as light in the hope of things [eternal](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05551b.htm); because he alone could save his [soul](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14153a.htm) that did not [fear](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06021a.htm) to lose it for Christ. In order, therefore, that the Apostles might entertain this [happy](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07131b.htm), constant [courage](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06147a.htm) with their whole heart, and have no tremblings about the harshness of taking up the [cross](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04529a.htm), and that they might not be ashamed of the punishment of [Christ](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374c.htm), nor think what He endured disgraceful for themselves (for the bitterness of suffering was to be displayed without despite to His [glorious](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm) power), Jesus took Peter and James and his brother John, and ascending a very high mountain with them apart, showed them the brightness of His [glory](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm); because, although they had recognised the majesty of [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) in Him, yet the power of His body, wherein His Deity was contained, they did not [know](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm). And, therefore, rightly and significantly, had He promised that certain of the [disciples](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05029a.htm) standing by should not taste death till they saw the [Son of Man](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14144a.htm) coming in His Kingdom , that is, in the kingly brilliance which, as specially belonging to the [nature](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10715a.htm) of His assumed Manhood, He wished to be conspicuous to these three men. For the unspeakable and unapproachable vision of the Godhead Itself which is reserved till [eternal](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05551b.htm) life for the pure in heart, they could in no wise look upon and see while still surrounded with mortal flesh. The Lord displays His [glory](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm), therefore, before chosen witnesses, and invests that bodily shape which He shared with others with such splendour, that His face was like the sun's brightness and His garments equalled the whiteness of snow.

**III. The object and the meaning of the Transfiguration**

And in this Transfiguration the foremost object was to remove the offense of the cross from the [disciple's](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05029a.htm) heart, and to prevent their [faith](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm) being disturbed by the humiliation of His [voluntary](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15506a.htm) Passion by revealing to them the excellence of His hidden dignity. But with no less foresight, the foundation was laid of the Holy Church's hope, that the whole body of Christ might realize the character of the change which it would have to receive, and that the members might promise themselves a share in that [honour](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07462a.htm) which had already shone forth in their Head. About which the Lord had Himself said, when He spoke of the majesty of His coming, “Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in their Father's Kingdom” [Matthew 13:43](http://www.newadvent.org/bible/mat013.htm#verse43), while the blessed [Apostle Paul](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11567b.htm) bears [witness](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15677a.htm) to the self-same thing, and says: “for I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the future [glory](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm) which shall be revealed in us” [Romans 8:18](http://www.newadvent.org/bible/rom008.htm#verse18): and again, “for you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in [God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm). For when Christ our life shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in [glory](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm)” [Colossians 3:3](http://www.newadvent.org/bible/col003.htm#verse3) . But to confirm the Apostles and assist them to all [knowledge](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm), still further instruction was conveyed by that [miracle](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10338a.htm).

**IV. The significance of the appearance of Moses and Elias**

For [Moses](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10596a.htm) and Elias, that is the Law and the Prophets\*\*, appeared talking with the Lord; that in the presence of those five men might most [truly](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) be fulfilled what was said: “In two or three witnesses stands every word” [Deuteronomy 19:15](http://www.newadvent.org/bible/deu019.htm#verse15) . What more stable, what more steadfast than this word, in the proclamation of which the trumpet of the Old and of the [New Testament](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14530a.htm) joins, and the documentary evidence of the ancient witnesses combine with the teaching of the [Gospel](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06655b.htm)? For the pages of both covenants corroborate each other, and He Whom under the veil of [mysteries](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10662a.htm) the types that went before had promised, is displayed clearly and conspicuously by the splendour of the present [glory](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm). Because, as says the blessed John, “the law was given through [Moses](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10596a.htm): but [grace](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06689a.htm) and [truth](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) came through [Jesus Christ](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374c.htm)” [John 1:17](http://www.newadvent.org/bible/joh001.htm#verse17), in Whom is fulfilled both the promise of prophetic figures and the purpose of the legal ordinances: for He both teaches the [truth](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) of [prophecy](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm) by His presence, and renders the commands possible through [grace](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06689a.htm).

**V. St. Peter's suggestion contrary to the Divine order**

The Apostle Peter, therefore, being excited by the revelation of these [mysteries](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10662a.htm), despising things mundane and scorning things earthly, was seized with a sort of frenzied craving for the things [eternal](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05551b.htm), and being filled with rapture at the whole vision, desired to make his abode with Jesus in the place where he had been blessed with the manifestation of His [glory](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm). Whence also he says, “Lord, it is [good](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm) for us to be here: if you will let us make three tabernacles , one for You, one for [Moses](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10596a.htm), and one for Elias.” [find scripture] But to this proposal the Lord made no answer, signifying that what he wanted was not indeed [wicked](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm), but contrary to the Divine order: since the world could not be saved, except by Christ's death, and by the Lord's example the faithful were called upon to [believe](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm) that, although there ought not to be any [doubt](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05141a.htm) about the promises of [happiness](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07131b.htm), yet we should understand that amidst the trials of this life we must ask for the power of endurance rather than the [glory](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm), because the joyousness of reigning cannot precede the times of suffering.

**VI. The import of the Father's voice from the cloud**

“And so while He was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved [Son](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14142b.htm), in whom I am well pleased; hear Him.” [find scripture] The Father was indeed present in the [Son](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14142b.htm), and in the Lord's brightness, which He had tempered to the [disciples'](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05029a.htm) sight, the Father's Essence was not separated from the Only-begotten: but, in order to emphasize the two-fold personality, as the effulgence of the Son's body displayed the Son to their sight, so the Father's voice from out the cloud announced the Father to their hearing. And when this voice was heard, the [disciples](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05029a.htm) fell upon their faces, and were sore afraid, trembling at the majesty, not only of the [Father](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), but also of the Son: for they now had a deeper insight into the undivided Deity of Both: and in their [fear](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06021a.htm) they did not separate the One from the Other, because they [doubted](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05141a.htm) not in their [faith](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm). That was a wide and manifold testimony, therefore, and contained a fuller meaning than struck the ear. For when the Father said, This is My beloved [Son](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14142b.htm), in Whom, etc., was it not clearly meant, This is My Son, Whose it is to be [eternally](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05551b.htm) from Me and with Me? Because the Begetter is not anterior to the Begotten, nor the Begotten posterior to the Begetter. This is My Son, Who is separated from Me, neither by Godhead, nor by power, nor by [eternity](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05551b.htm). This is My Son, not adopted, but true-born, not created from another source, but begotten of Me: nor yet made like Me from another nature, but born equal to Me of My nature. This is My Son, through Whom all things were made, and without Whom was nothing made because all things that I do He does in like manner: and whatever I perform, He performs with Me inseparably and without difference: for the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son, and Our Unity is never divided: and though I am One Who begot, and He the Other Whom I begot, yet is it wrong for you to think anything of Him which is not possible of Me. This is My Son, Who sought not by grasping, and seized not in greediness, that equality with Me which He has, but remaining in the form of My [glory](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm), that He might carry out Our common plan for the restoration of [mankind](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm), He lowered the unchangeable Godhead even to the form of a slave.

**VII. Who it is we have to hear**

Hear Him, therefore, unhesitatingly, in Whom I am throughout well pleased, and by Whose preaching I am manifested, by Whose humiliation I am [glorified](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm); because He is the Truth and the Life , He is My Power and Wisdom. Hear Him, Whom the [mysteries](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10662a.htm) of the Law have foretold, Whom the mouths of [prophets](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm) have sung. Hear Him, Who redeems the world by His blood, Who binds the [devil](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04764a.htm), and carries off his chattels, Who destroys the bond of [sin](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14004b.htm), and the compact of the transgression. Hear Him, Who opens the way to heaven, and by the punishment of the cross prepares for you the steps of ascent to the Kingdom? Why do you tremble at being redeemed? Why do you [fear](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06021a.htm) to be healed of your wounds? Let that happen which Christ wills and I will. Cast away all fleshly [fear](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06021a.htm), and arm yourselves with faithful constancy; for it is unworthy that you should [fear](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06021a.htm) in the Saviour's Passion what by His good gift you shall not have to [fear](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06021a.htm) even at your own end.

**VIII. The Father's words have a universal application to the whole Church**

These things, dearly-beloved, were said not for their profit only, who heard them with their own ears, but in these three Apostles the whole [Church](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm) has learned all that their eyes saw and their ears heard. Let all [men's](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm) [faith](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm) then be established, according to the preaching of the most [holy](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07386a.htm) [Gospel](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06655b.htm), and let no one be ashamed of [Christ's](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374c.htm) cross, through which the world was redeemed. And let not any one [fear](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06021a.htm) to suffer for righteousness' sake, or [doubt](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05141a.htm) of the fulfilment of the promises, for this reason, that through toil we pass to rest and through death to life; since all the weakness of our humility was assumed by Him, in Whom, if we abide in the acknowledgment and [love](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09397a.htm) of Him, we conquer as He conquered, and receive what he promised, because, whether to the performance of His commands or to the endurance of adversities, the Father's fore-announcing voice should always be sounding in our ears, saying, “This is My beloved [Son](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14142b.htm), in Whom I am well pleased; hear Him”: Who lives and reigns, with the Father and the [Holy Ghost](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07409a.htm), for ever and ever. [Amen](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01407b.htm)

Wade’s commentary on Origen’s teaching of the Transfiguration:

\*- Origen also begins is teaching on the Transfiguration with reflection on the preceding text in Mathew (all of Chapter 16) beginning with the Parisees and Sad’duccees demanding for a sign, but Jesus telling them, “… an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given except the sign of Jonah.” Matthew 16:4.

Origen also teaches on the Leaven of the Parisees and Sad’duccees, being a shadow of the law-- preferring to live materially vice the spiritual intention of the law. Thus they left the loaves (of the Parisees and Sad’duccees) and did not return for them (to eat of the bread of the Parisees and Sad’duccees). As we know, we feed not on bread alone, but the Word of God.

Origen then moves on to reflect on what the people of Cæsarea Philippi say of Jesus and Peter’s eventual proclamation the Jesus is the Christ. Again here, Origen emphasizes that Peter imbued by the Holy Spirit and not influenced by the words and thoughts of the world claiming him to be John the Baptist or Elijah. He has spiritual faith.

Finally, Origen teaches on Jesus’ instruction that he must suffer and then be raised on the third day. His rebuked of Peter who loyally attempts guide him from the path of salvation and the spiritual need (not worldly need) for these things to happen for the salvation of the world. The instruction that we all must take up our cross and follow him into life (eternal life) but through our suffering (having spiritual faith)… ONLY after this discussion and the waiting of 6 days does Jesus lead his chosen disciples (Peter John and James) up the high mountain for the Transfiguration (foreshadowing of the Sabbath and the miracle of the Blessed Sacrament). Both St. Leo the Great and Origen follow the similar pattern that the Transfiguration cannot be understood fully, without a good understanding of Matthew Chapter 16. Jesus, the Gospel, the Word is leading us, transforming our minds and hearts to a much deeper understand of the significance of the Transfiguration and the lesson in it for all of us.

\*\*- Origen also refers to the appearance of Moses and Elijah in a similar manner. Moses of the Law and Elijah of the Prophets—all the Prophets. St. Leo the Great places less emphasis on this point that Elijah represents not just his prophesy but all the prophesies of all the prophets of the Old Testament. Origen even gives this idea a name: synecdoche. Origen says on the point similarly to St. Leo, “…[Moses](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10596a.htm) — the law — and Elijah, — in the way of synecdoche, not one [prophet](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm) only, but all the [prophets](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm)— holding converse with Jesus; for such is the force of the words talking with Him;…”. Synecdoche is a literary device in which a part of something represents the whole, or it may use a whole to represent a part. Synecdoche may also use larger groups to refer to smaller groups, or vice versa. A modern use of a Synecdoche would be a “suit” referring to an executive in business. Here both Origen and St. Leo hold a consistent view of the appearance of Elijah.