

Father will love them, and We will come to them and abide with them.” Like Jesus’ disciples, we must keep His word to share His Good News with all. Whether our role might include singing, preaching, or silently doing for others as we would have them do to us; to be convincing, we must do whatever we are doing with faith, hope, and love; always humbly beholding, as present, the glory of Him, Who, even as He walked and talked, declared His kingdom to be “not of this world, yet, “at hand.” Let us “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”(2 Peter 3:18).

Festal readings and traditions

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church the Feast of the Transfiguration falls during Dormition fast (*Filseta*) and is celebrated on 19 August. It is numbered among our Lord’s nine Major Feasts.

<http://ethiopianorthodox.org/english/calendar.html>

The theme for the day is:

Morning pre liturgy – Ps. 67 [68]:15-16
Mt. 17:1-14

Liturgical Readings:

Heb. 11:23-30

2Pet.: 1:15 -end

Acts 7:34 – 51

Ps. 88 [89]:12 – 13 –

Luke 9:28 - 38

The Anaphora of St. Mary/ St Dioscorous

Traditionally, the celebration begins on the eve of the Feast, with groups of children going

from house to house. As they go, they sing lyrics highlighting biblical accounts of this feast. In order to commemorate what happened on that holy mountain, two thousand years ago; shepherds make a long whip (*Jeraf*) from sisal fibers and “crack” through the air to simulate that heavenly tone heard by the Apostles, as God spoke. Also, that evening, many people light a torch (*chebo*) to represent the light seen by those who saw Christ transfigured.

In the country side, students at traditional church schools, usually prepare a big feast and invite the congregation and the locals to join the festivity. The main reason for the students preparing this special reception is to identify with the apostles, who left behind their families to follow Christ. Most of these students have already left their family homes, in search of education. They travel far away from their villages, finding shelter in and around monasteries, to learn church education and serve their church in the mean time. Like Apostle’s leap of faith, they decide to rely on God to look after them, without worrying about what they will eat, or where they will sleep. The locals usually support these students so they can continue their studies.

<http://ethiopianorthodox.org/english/ethiopian/school.html>

Glory be to God now and forever!

The Transfiguration of Jesus



Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name (Ps. 88 [89]:12). This prophecy was spoken 3000 years ago by King David.

During Jesus’ ministry, when He came to the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Mt. 16:13–17). He also told His disciples that he would suffer, be killed and be raised again, the third day. (Mt.16:21 – 23)

After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and led them up a high mountain. There, while alone with Him,

www.ethiopianorthodox.org

suddenly, He was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white: whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. He was still speaking, when a bright cloud overshadowed them. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

That was the second time, such a divine voice, attesting to the truth of Jesus' Son-ship was heard from above. The first instance was as Jesus began His public ministry, while being baptized by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). This second time, as the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were so afraid. Then, Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Arise, and be not afraid." And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, except Jesus. Coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead" (Mt. 17:1-9). Our Lord, who was born from Virgin Mary in Bethlehem, to become one of us, did not prevent Him from giving them a glimpse of His divine power and glory.

The transfiguration of Jesus Christ is recorded in the three synoptic gospels (Matthew 17:1-3, Mark 9:2-9 and Luke 9:28-36). Each version names the three disciples who accompanied Jesus, to stand as human witnesses to the glory

of Christ. Additionally, there were three heavenly witnesses: Moses, Elijah, and the voice of God from heaven. Thus, the Old Testament law requiring three witnesses to attest to any fact (Deuteronomy 19:15) was fulfilled: both on earth, as well as in heaven. In his second epistle, St Peter also reiterates how he had witnessed Christ's transfiguration (2 Peter 1:16).

Symbolically, Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets, respectively. Christ fulfilled the Law and all of the Old Testament prophecies. Moses and Elias appeared with Jesus, because He wanted to reassure His disciples that he was actually the God of everything anticipated by Moses and Elias. During Moses' ministry, he expressed the desire to see the face of the Lord. But, God told him, "Thou can not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Ex. 33:17 – 23). However, this celebration commemorates the omnipotent God, ultimately fulfilling Moses' request, by allowing him to see and be seen, as far as the disciples could bear it, beholding the glory of the Almighty on that holy Mountain.

Abba Giorgis, in his commentary, observed that two of the three disciples picked by our Lord were unmarried, and one married; and from the Law and the Prophets Moses had been married and Elias who had not been married. Of the married ones: Moses, in his time, had been chief of prophets, while Peter was emerging as leader among the apostles. This is to reminds us that those who are unmarried should not presume that they are

any better than those who are married (*Metschafe Myster* 30:25).

For those three apostles, Christ's transfiguration, on that holy mountain, reaffirmed their faith in Him. Likewise, as we let His light reflect on our path, it removes any doubts about our faith. As we look up to heaven, we should beseech Him to bless our lives, enabling us to live according to the scriptures, so that what we do will set an example for others, attesting to God's amazing work reveal in us.

When the apostles experienced that amazing radiance, beyond human imagination, Peter suggested making three tabernacles; one for our Lord, one for Moses and one for Elias (Mt. 17:1-9). Overwhelmed by what they were witnessing, Peter didn't care whether he had a shelter for himself or not. He only wanted that experience to continue, and live in that incredible surrounding. This should remind us that to be with Christ, brings true peace. That yields harmony, within, exceeding every worldly expectation.

Now, in order to appreciate the force of Christ's glory, as it appeared upon that mountain, we should focus on one of St. John's theological sequels to the above synoptic coverage of Christ's transfiguration. In the Gospel according to St. John, chapter 14, verse 23, Jesus told His disciples, "Those who love Me will keep my word, and my