

Unit 6 "Observances" Lesson 27
The Transfiguration of Christ

Objective: Students will be able to 1) state that we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ on August 6, and 2) explain that this feast reminds us that God wants us to be transfigured too.

For the Catechist

The Feast of the Transfiguration is a celebration of the affirmation of Christ's Divinity and the restoration of God's image in us. We are the children of God, but we are yet to receive the fullness of the New Life. This fullness awaits us after death.

This lesson unfolds the meaning of Jesus' Transfiguration as a revelation of the final happiness in heaven that is the hope of Christians. To help the students relate to the concept of revelation, this lesson is introduced by discussing experiences of discovery and unveiling. The children come to realize that they can see more and much more will be made known to them as they grow and develop. The same is true of our growth and development as Christians.

This growth and development is explained further in the introduction of each book in this *God With Us* series:

"The goal of Christian life as intended by God is our divinization. The Scripture tells us that God has accomplished His divine plan in Christ so that we 'might become sharers of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:3-4). The Eastern Fathers stressed that this divinization was a process, one that begins in us with the mystery of baptism but which will not be completed until the resurrection of the dead on the last day.

"Catechesis is one way to realize this call to divinization. Catechesis makes us aware that we are in the light of the Lord and motivates us to manifest the life of the Spirit within us" (Part 1 of this *Teacher Manual*, 7)

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: Troparion of the Feast of the Transfiguration

Introduction: Discussion of discovering new things **Need:** pictures from magazines.

Read Text Aloud: Have the students volunteer to read the text aloud or have the students read sections silently.

Activity Tracks: Choose a basic, group, or craft activity (detailed on the pages that follow) to reinforce the lesson.

- *Basic:* Listen to Him"
- *Group:* "God's Promise Is Fulfilled" Review Game
- *Craft:* We Are Growing

Closing: Troparion of the Feast of the Transfiguration

Icon Packets:

Come Bless the Lord:
The Transfiguration of Christ

Teaching Pics

Transfiguration

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

Feast of the Transfiguration

"One event of the Lord's life has been especially important in Byzantine theology. It is recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:1-7; Lk 9:28-36) and is referred to in 2 Peter 1:16-19. Jesus led His chief disciples, Peter, James and John onto a high mountain. He underwent transfiguration (in Greek, metamorphosis) in their sight so that 'His face shone like the sun, and his garments became as radiant as light' (Mt 17:2). These are tokens of the indescribable glory in which His divinity was revealed. Here too there is a theophany of the Trinity: the voice of the Father gives the same testimony as at the baptism, 'This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him' (Mt 17:5). The Spirit appears as a bright cloud overshadowing Jesus with Moses and Elijah beside Him.

"The hymns of the feast in the Byzantine Churches repeatedly connect the Transfiguration with the paschal mystery By one tradition, the Transfiguration occurred forty days before Christ's passion. Because of this tradition, the Church celebrates the feast of the Transfiguration on August 6, forty days before the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

"The Transfiguration became important in Byzantine theology because it reveals so clearly the mission of Christ. In the Transfiguration Jesus reveals the accomplishment of God's plan in the mystery of the Incarnation. The vesper hymns of the Transfiguration proclaim, 'Through Your transfiguration You returned Adam's nature to its original splendor, restoring its very elements to the glory and brilliance of Your divinity' (LLI 50-51).

Our Transfiguration

"Thus our spirituality is really a process of growth as we are made like God. It is a lifetime journey and involves our whole life. It begins at Baptism and is not finished until death, and beyond. In the *Life of Moses*, St. Gregory of Nyssa compared the spiritual life to the exodus. Our Baptism is the start of the journey, like the crossing of the Red Sea. We enter a new life, only vaguely aware of where it will lead. We spend forty years in the desert: our life in the world. We struggle on, advance, fall back, rest and go on. But God makes His presence felt in the pillar of fire (the Holy Mysteries) and in the cloud (Holy Tradition). In death we reach the Promised Land, crossing the Jordan and entering the Age to come. At the resurrection will come the final transformation, we will be transfigured totally—body, soul and spirit—in the likeness of God.

"In our Byzantine calendar, there is one Great Feast falling toward the end of the Church Year which gives us the image of this reality and actually celebrates it: August 6, the Transfiguration of Christ. On this Feast, we bless grapes as a real, tangible sign of Theosis. Grapes are the result of a long transformation, from the seed to the vine to the grape clusters. But further 'growth' is possible. The grapes can be transformed into wine; and by the power of the Holy Spirit sent from the Father the wine can be transfigured by Divinity and become the Blood of Christ our God. Thus it transforms us.

"An apt image of this transfiguration, given by God Himself is the burning bush on Mt Sinai (Exodus 3). An ordinary weed is gloriously transfigured and made beautiful by the fire of God's presence in it. It remains a weed—it does not become a rosebush—and is not destroyed, but penetrated and glorified. In the same way, our life in Christ is meant to transfigure us: we are to radiate the divine nature in which God chooses to give us a share" (LLIII 20-21)

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Let's pray the Troparion of the Feast of the Transfiguration.

[The handout is at the end of this lesson.]

Introduction

[Bring in pictures from magazines or newspapers. Show only one section of the picture and have the students try to guess what it is. Then reveal the whole picture.]

Today I have some pictures to show you. What do you see in them? Do you think this is part of a bigger picture? Explain. Is it hard to tell what you are looking at if you don't see the whole picture? Does that happen sometimes when we look at people? Some of you probably don't know some details about me just by looking at me. [Share something about yourself—a family detail, a work situation, or even a food you like.] Now you know that about me because I told you. Today we are going to learn how Jesus showed something so much greater about Himself to His disciples.

Let's turn to our lesson.

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The Transfiguration of Christ



Jesus went up to Mount Tabor with Peter, James, and John. Then He was revealed in all His glory before them. Moses and Elijah (Elias) appeared as witnesses of this Transfiguration. Our Church celebrates Jesus' Transfiguration on August 6th.

We can read about this event in the Gospel of Matthew 17:1-8. Complete the sentences after you read the Scripture.

"And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like **the sun** and his clothes became **white as light**. And behold, **Moses** and **Elijah** appeared to them, conversing with him."

(Matthew 17:2-3)

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Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

... appeared to them, conversing with him"
(Mt 17:2-3).

Elijah (Elias) is a prophet who told the people about God. Who is Moses? (A very important leader who listened to God's call to lead His people to freedom). What does prostrate mean? (To lie flat on the ground with your face down) When do we do prostrations? (During the Great Fast) What do we show when we do prostrations? (We show that we worship God.)

...fulfills the Old Covenant which they represent

Who in the icon represent the Old Covenant? (Elijah/Elias and Moses) Why are they bowing? (They are reminding us that Jesus Christ completes and fulfills the Old Covenant.) Who is the New Covenant? (Jesus Christ)

.. we can reflect His light in our lives.

How can we do that? (By always living our lives the way God wants) Will that be hard? (Yes and No) Why? Who helps us live the way God wants? (The Holy Spirit) Where did we hear that Jesus was "Light from Light" before? (From Simeon)

The icon of the Transfiguration tells the story that we just read. The icon shows us the glorious light surrounding Christ who is wearing the same garments that we see in the icon for the Resurrection. On Christ's left is Moses who is holding the Tablets of the Law. On His right is the Prophet Elias. Moses and Elias were two of the greatest people of the Old Testament, who lived hundreds of years before Jesus. During their lives both had seen God. The icon shows them bowing before Christ to remind us that Christ completes and fulfills the Old Covenant which they represent.

In the lower portion of the icon are the apostles Peter, James and John. They are overwhelmed by seeing Jesus in this radiant light. We read that a voice said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5). At what other event did we hear a voice identify Jesus as the Son of God? **Read Matthew 3:17** and write the words that are the same as the ones we just read.

"This is my beloved Son; with whom I am well pleased."

At Jesus' transfiguration we see that He is "Light from Light." Because He is one with His Father, Jesus shines with the light of God. He shows us what happens when people live their whole life in union with God. In the troparion of this feast, we ask Christ to "Let your eternal light shine upon us sinners." We pray that the light of Christ shines on us so that we can reflect His light in our lives.



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.. we become like Jesus Christ.

[Let the children share experiences as they answer the questions. Praise them often for their good examples.]

....we too are meant to be transfigured.

[Discuss this tradition as it is practiced in your church. [The following explanation is taken from the "Background Reading" for this lesson:

"On this Feast, we bless grapes as a real, tangible sign of Theosis. Grapes are the result of a long transformation, from the seed to the vine to the grape clusters. But further 'growth' is possible. The grapes can be transformed into wine; and by the power of the Holy Spirit sent from the Father, the wine can be transfigured by Divinity and become the Blood of Christ our God. Thus, it transforms us."]

Words to Remember: [Read the words together, and use them to introduce, summarize, and/or review the lesson.]

In the Beatitudes Jesus told us how to live the way God wants. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we continue to learn to live God's way so that we can be like Him. Can people tell you are a member of God's family by the way you talk and act? Our hope is that by listening to Jesus and following Him, we become like Jesus Christ.

This is what Jesus' transfiguration shows us—we will become like Christ in our resurrection if we follow Him. Read 1 John 3:2-3 and fill in the missing words from verse 3:

"We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

On the Feast of the Transfiguration, grapes and other fruit are blessed. They have changed and been transformed as they grew and became ripe. They will be transfigured again as food for our use. They remind us that we too are meant to be transfigured.



Words to Remember:
Transfigure: To change or be transformed in appearance.
Feast of the Transfiguration: The feast day that recalls how Jesus was revealed in all His glory. Our Church celebrates this feast day on August 6th and reminds us that God wants us to be transfigured too.

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Activity Tracks

Basic: "Listen to Him"

Lets read the following stories and figure out what Jesus would want us to do. Write the ending to the story and have it show that the person s actions shine with the light of Christ

"Listen to Him"

Did you ever have to make a decision between what you wanted to do and what you knew Jesus Christ would want you to do? That is what is happening in the following three stories. Read the beginning of the story, and write the ending that shows the light of Christ is shining by the actions of the person.

I. Marianna: I am so glad it is Friday. I plan to do absolutely nothing all weekend.
 Clifford: Did you forget? This weekend we are helping at the soup kitchen. We have to be at church by 8 a.m. tomorrow morning.
 Marianna: No way. Didn't you just hear me say—I am doing nothing this weekend. Marianna went home that night and turned on the television. The only time she got up was when her mom called her to eat dinner. At 8 p.m. the phone rang. It was her catechist reminding her about the plans for Saturday.
 Finally, Marianna interrupted and said,

II. Joshua: Did you do your math homework last night?
 Helena: Yes, you know I always do.
 Joshua: Yes, that's why I'm asking you to give it to me to copy. Last night was the first time I never got around to finishing it.
 Helena: _____

III. Mom: Don't forget tonight we have church.
 Josh: What?
 Mom: Remember, tonight is the first Great Fast service for this year. We always go.
 Josh: I'll go to all the others. Just let me skip tonight.
 Mom: No, we are going as a family.
 Josh: For once, let us do what we want.
 Josh stomped to his room. He sat there for a few minutes and heard his mom come up the steps. He yelled, "Mom,

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Group: "God's Promise Is Fulfilled" Review Game

Materials: All the flashcards for the year.

Today we are going to remind ourselves about everything we learned this year. We are going to play a game using the flashcards from all the lessons. We will have two teams and one person to ask the questions. After the word is said, the person who stands up first gets to answer. If he or she is wrong, they have to keep standing until the correct answer is said. Then everyone sits down and we start again.

Craft: We Are Growing

Materials: Flower seeds, plastic containers, and potting soil

[Have sample ready to show children.] *What does transfigure mean? (To change or be transformed in appearance) For our activity today we are going to plant flower seeds. Does anyone plant flowers at your house? What happens? Do you look at them often? You get to take your plants home today so you can look at them to see what happens. If you take care of them the way the instructions on the package tell us, you might have a pretty present to give your mom for Mother's Day. Could anyone think about how we are like a seed that turns into a flower? (With love and care, we grow into something beautiful too.) I hope this summer every time you see a flower you think about how Jesus wants us to love and take care of each other so that we can all become beautiful people just like the beautiful flowers.*

Closing:

Let's pray the Troparion of the Feast of the Transfiguration
[The handout is at the end of this lesson.]

Transfiguration

*Feast of the
Transfiguration*

The feast day that recalls how Jesus was revealed in all His glory. Our Church celebrates this feast day on August 6th and reminds us that God wants us to be transfigured too.

To change or be transformed in appearance.

Troparion of the Feast of the Transfiguration

You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God, showing Your disciples as much of Your glory as they could hold. Let Your eternal light shine also upon us sinners through the prayers of the Mother of God.

O Giver of light, glory to You.

Melkite
Greek
Catholic
Church

Troparion of the Feast of the Transfiguration

Thou wert transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God, manifesting Thy glory to Thy disciples inasmuch as they could understand it. Let Thy eternal light shine upon us sinners through the prayers of the Mother of God. O

Giver of light, glory to Thee.

Romanian
Greek
Catholic
Diocese of
Canton

Troparion of the Feast of the Transfiguration

You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God, revealing as much of Your glory to Your disciples as they could behold. Through the prayers of the Mother of God, let Your everlasting light also shine upon us sinners.
O Giver of light, glory be to You.

Ruthenian
Byzantine
Catholic
Metropolitan
Province

Troparion of the Feast of the Transfiguration

When You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God, You showed Your disciples as much of Your glory as they could possibly bear. Through the prayers of the Mother of God, let Your everlasting light now shine forth for us sinners. O Giver of light, glory to You.

Ukrainian
Catholic
Diocese of
St. Josaphat

Troparion of the Feast of the Transfiguration

You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our
God, revealing as much of Your glory to Your disciples as
they could behold. Through the prayers of the Mother of
God, let Your everlasting light also shine upon us sinners.
O giver of light, Glory be to You.

Ukrainian
Catholic
Synod