

# 27 — Transfiguration

## **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson students will be able to ...

- state that the Feast of the Transfiguration celebrates the revelation of Christ's divinity and the divinization of man
- realize that Christ's transfiguration in our human nature is a preview of our own transfiguration.
- define theosis or divinization as an ongoing process of growing in God's image and likeness as we "share in the divine nature" (1 Peter 1:4)—we become God-like!
- understand that grapes are blessed on this feast day because they are a tangible sign of theosis—the fruit grows and is transformed by the Holy Spirit and transforms us when we receive the Eucharist.

## **For the Catechist**

The title of Book 7 is *We Become God-Like*, and this final lesson on the Feast of the Transfiguration illustrates how glorious we are called to become! Throughout the year the students have learned about God's plan and the way the evil one leads us astray. They also learned about the way Jesus Christ re-created the world and gained for us eternal life. This lesson helps them realize that God's plan is for us to share in His divine life just as Christ shared in our earthly life. Although this idea can be overwhelming for students who may not have ever thought about feeling or wanting to become divine, this transformation is comforting and energizing because they come to realize that they can become more than they are. One poster says it well: *"Please be patient. God is not finished with me yet."*

Teaching about our divinization, our theosis, is important throughout this *God With Us* series. In the introduction of each book is included the following statements about catechesis:

*"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 all teacher manuals for the *God With Us* series).*

## **Materials Needed**

*Opening Prayer:* Vespers folders

*Review:* Easel or wall pad with the objectives listed

*Introduction:* Seedless grapes, napkins, one balloon that you can blow up

*Guided Reading:* student text, pens, pencils, paper

*Vespers:* Folders, prayer sheets, tape or glue, scissors

*Activity A:* "Journal," and Journal folders and pens or pencils

*Closing Prayer:* Vespers folders

## 1. Opening Prayer

- Gather in the icon corner and distribute the Vespers folders.
- Pray the Opening Prayers from Vespers.

## 2. Review

Lessons in this unit are not taught consecutively; therefore, review the last lesson taught.

## 3. Introduction

- Bring in a container of grapes and share the grapes among the students.
- Ask the following question: *What process must these grapes go through to become the Blood of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist? (The fruit grows from seeds; the grapes are transformed into wine; the wine transformed by the Holy Spirit during the Liturgy; and we are transformed to become God-like when we receive the Eucharist.)*
- Brainstorm any other foods that get transformed. (*Wheat to bread to the Body of Christ*)
- Take out a balloon and ask the students to brainstorm about how to make this empty balloon useful. (*Blow air in and it becomes a decoration or a toy*)
- Read the following aloud:  
*Just as we saw this empty balloon become all that it can be when air was added, we can look at ourselves the same way. We can be the person who just exists or we can become all that God asks us to become. When we work with God and allow the Holy Spirit to breathe energy into us, we can become what God had planned for us. And God has great plans for us—He wants us to share in His divine nature. Every time we receive the Eucharist we do just that—we become God-like by receiving the Body and Blood of Christ.*

## 4. Guided Reading, Page 137, "God's Plan"

Take turns reading these paragraphs.

**Supplemental Activity:** Bring in newspapers or magazines and ask the students to find stories of people who are not following God's plan. Share the stories and discuss why they might have chosen to sin. At the end of class pray for these people so that they can change.

## Guided Reading, Page 138, "Transfiguration of Jesus"

Have the students read the scriptural passage aloud together. Discuss how they would have felt if they were there.

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## Background Reading (Our Transformation)

"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 [our final transformation] and actually celebrates it: August 6, the Transfiguration of Christ. ... His transfiguration in our nature is a preview of our own. It is as though the Father is repeating the insight given in the account of the Burning Bush. In both cases, He is trying to show what His idea of our relationship with Him should be (*the purpose or goal of religion*). 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" (*LLIII 20-21*).

## **Guided Reading, Page 138, "The Burning Bush"**

- Read the scriptural passage aloud as a group.
- Ask someone to explain what is the point of the final paragraph. (*Even though we don't physically change—the bush doesn't turn into a rosebush—we do change and become transformed by God.*)
- Have them relate that to their lives. (*They will still get sick; they will still have bad hair days; they will still not be the best at everything—but they know they are filled with God's love and that is what is important.*)

## **Guided Reading, Page 138, "Blessing of Fruit"**

Read this section aloud. Refer back to the introduction and the activity.

### **5. Ancient Wisdom for Today**

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the information on this page. Have the students write their answers to the questions and share them with the class.

[Suggestions: *We are to become radiant lights shining in the world; we are to stand beside God; Christ's face became a bright light; we are standing by God and the bright light of the Holy Trinity shines through us—that reminds us that we are called to be transfigured.*]

### **6. Icon Study**

- Have the students read the commentary on the icon of the Transfiguration.

### **7. Vespers**

- Distribute the Vespers folder.
- Give each student one copy of the prayer from Vespers (see page 200).
- Ask the students to tape or glue this prayer onto a new page in their Vespers folder.

### **8. Activity A: My Personal Journal**

Distribute Worksheet A along with pens or pencils. Have the students complete the worksheet in silence (or you can play religious music if available) and place it in their folder. Plan accordingly, but they should need no more than 5 minutes to complete the journal entry.

### **9. Summary**

Review the lesson. Ask if they are any further comments or questions about today's topics.

### **10. Closing Prayer**

- Gather in the icon corner.
- Pray the Vespers prayer for the Feast of the Transfiguration.

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## **Background Reading (Divine Nature)**

"An apt image of the 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 21).

# *Vespers*

## *Feast of the Transfiguration*

**(Tone 4)** O Lord, when You were transfigured before being crucified, Mount Tabor was made to resemble heaven; for a cloud was extended as a canopy, and the Father bore witness to You. Peter, James, and John were present there, the same three apostles who were to be with You at the time of the betrayal of Judas, so that, having seen You in glory, they would not be dismayed at the time of your suffering. Likewise, O Lord, make us worthy to recognize You as our God in the same sufferings You endured in your great mercy, and to adore You.

O Lord, as a preparation to your crucifixion, You led some of your disciples to a high mountain and became transfigured before them, enlightening them with the light of your glory. In this way, you showed the reality of the resurrection You are to grant to us in your love for all and in your almighty power as God. Make us worthy of this resurrection, O God, for You are gracious and the Lover of Mankind.

O Lord, when You were transfigured on a high mountain in the presence of Your foremost disciples, You radiated with glory, showing how those who lead an outstanding life of virtue will be made worthy of the glory of heaven. Elijah and Moses, conversing with the Lord, showed Him to be the Lord of the living and the dead. God who spoke through the Law and the Prophets, the same to whom the Father's voice bore witness out of the bright cloud, saying: Hear Him, for it is He, who through his cross despoiled Hades and granted eternal life to the dead.

Indeed, O Lord, the mountain that had been dark with smoke today becomes honorable and holy because You stood on it. The mystery hidden from the beginning of the world becomes manifest in Your transfiguration before Peter, James, and John. They fell with their faces to the ground, unable as they were to bear the light of Your countenance and the splendor of Your clothing. A further marvel was the vision of Moses and Elijah, conversing with You on your future, and the voice of the Father bearing witness and saying: This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him! He is the One who will convey great mercy upon the world.

## *My Personal Journal*

Write a letter thanking God for calling you to share in His divine nature. In the letter tell Him that knowing you are called to share in His divine nature will help you make the right choices.