

Song of the Exile [Dist Open hands

Tristis est Anima

(Pauline)

REGO-310

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"Our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the savior we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body." St Paul. The Transfiguration of Jesus on Mt Tabor is surely one of the most extraordinary things Jesus did or had happen to Him. Even to this, that it was not talked about during His lifetime, though everything else was, even things He wanted kept quiet. We are fortunate that the incident was preserved for us by the evangelists, because it tells a lot about being human in Christ Jesus. St Luke's gospel says that Jesus took Peter, James and John and went onto a mountain to pray. He went to pray a good deal, and prayed habitually before any important action.... before choosing the 12, for instance. And He taught the Lord's Prayer, the Our Father, when (as the gospels say) He had finished praying in a certain place. Jesus went to that 'certain place' all the time, apparently finding a special place to pray wherever He was, so that Judas for instance knew that He'd be in the Garden praying earnestly before His test. Those of us who need to pray, and maybe even need to have a place to pray, should recognize when we are like in this. Jesus wasn't entirely reticent about His prayer. Once He told His disciples of a vision in which He'd seen Satan fall from heaven: and it must have been Jesus Himself who told about the angels of comfort in Gethsemani since the three who were with Him there were fast asleep. So He let them know something about His union with God in prayer and even about His visions. But the Transfiguration is an incident without parallel in the Bible, though some of the incidentals to it are common enough. The cloud and the glory and the voice are ways the Bible has of saying God is present, for example, and the 'deep sleep' means the kind of mystical state that Abraham was in (for instance) when God made a covenant with him.

But if other changes, transfigurations are common in religious recorded practice and culture, in none does a human remain human even when seized by God; so, when all the explanations and interpretations are done, we are still faced with utter mystery in Jesus Christ. What His particular prayer on this occasion was about, however, is not part of the mystery, for St Luke records that Jesus, Moses & Elijah spoke of His passage which He was about to fulfill in Jerusalem. There's no doubt what "His passage" means, since Jesus was transfigured right after predicting for the first time that He would die in Jerusalem, and since He told His disciples on the way down the mountain after it that they were to tell no one about it until after the Son of Man had suffered and risen again. It seems astonishing that in the middle of this glory and power, the talk should be about suffering. Perhaps it's because we see and hear about so much human suffering around the entire earth, daily on TV and in the news, that we can become disinclined to remember and pray over Jesus' suffering. We do not, perhaps, pray over Christ's suffering as once we did. Some writers on spirituality say that our problem is that we do not grasp that God forgives our sins: others say we yearn for "cheap grace" and cannot even understand what "sin" means. But through the centuries, Christians have come to know both their sin and God's incredible forgiveness precisely by praying over Christ's Passion. Perhaps one reason why we do not think of Jesus' Passion (and would really rather not think of our own sins, which contributed to it) is that we cannot grasp His Passage as a whole, His Exodus as St Luke calls it indicating that the Transfiguration foreshadows His going out of a life on this earth which would end in death into a life in God's glory which will never end. || Reflect now in prayer a little, as we listen

L'OS.E.50
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to a hymn from the MUSIC (O Nata Lux)

Liturgy of the Transfiguration

PRAYERS

Continuing the reflections on Christ's Transfiguration that

'O Nata Lux' by Th. Tallis
 I was ^{quoting} ^{with you:} People who don't truly believe in and earnestly look forward to their own resurrection (a belief and hope brought about only by steady prayer) will not easily suffer with Jesus through His Passion, and will not at all understand why Christians hold many things evil and destructive which most of the rest of humankind think harmless fun and games. The dignity of our persons rests on our sharing our humanity, body & spirit, with the Son of God into whose risen life we have been baptised, and our behaviour is shaped by a specific destiny, of our own transformation. For we will have our exodus too, out of our weak flesh, a transformation putting an end to our interior suffering from violating our own consciences, the sorrow which is the first, most immediate ^{and} consequence of our own sin. Since we are sinful, we are subject to this suffering all our lives long, and we are impotent to end the suffering we inflict in our freedom on ourselves.

The Transfiguration of Jesus, though, was only for a brief moment; and though we live in Him now, our faces ~~are~~ only rarely shine bright like the sun. Yet around those who know Him, there really could already be the aurora, the halo of the promise we know of as peace or joy, the gift and the duty He laid on His disciples when He came back from the dead: 'Peace to you: receive the Holy Spirit'.