

*Pope Shenouda III
series of pamphlets
1*

*The Transfiguration
and some meditations
upon the feast of the Transfiguration*

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His Holiness Pope Shenouda III
Pope and Patriarch of the See of Alexandria and of all the
Predication of the Evangelist St. Mark

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
the One God, Amen

You will read in this pamphlet about:

The Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus-Christ and its
theological signification.

The transfiguration of Moses and Eliah and its pointing
to the transfiguration of the human nature.

The transfiguration of our nature in the Resurrection,
and its transfiguration here on earth.

The relation between the Transfiguration and the gifts.

The relation between the Transfiguration and the
promises of God.

PREFACE

What is the story of these pamphlets?

Many people are inclined to read concise writings, more than what they read in big books.

Therefore we have seen to publish for you these pamphlets, in a single bunch of the small size.

They will be published in the weeks when the Kiraza magazine will not appear, and in the weeks when no big books will be published.

The price is insignificant and less than the price of a daily newspaper.

We present to you, dear reader, this first pamphlet, about the Transfiguration, on the occasion of the feast of the Transfiguration.

Pope Shenouda III

August 1996

We congratulate all of you for the feast of the Transfiguration, which is one of the Lord's feasts, and the Church celebrates it on the 13th of the month of Misra, which is the 19th of the month of August. The story of the Transfiguration is mentioned in the holy Gospel (Mark and Luke).

THE STORY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

According to the gospel of the apostle saint Mark, the story of the Transfiguration was mentioned like this:

[Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves, and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus: "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah", because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying: "This is My beloved Son, hear Him!" Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.] (Mark 9: 2-8).

And in the narration of the apostle saint Luke, he added saying: "And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep, and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him" (Luke 9: 30-32).

THE GLORY AND DIVINITY OF CHRIST

The expression "glory" is mentioned more than once in the gospel of Luke.

As regards His divinity, it is evident in that in a moment, He was transfigured to this illuminating brightful aspect, whose brightness was magnificent..... and about which it was said: "His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them" (Mark 6:2).

His divinity is also evident in the manner of His capacity to bring Elijah and Moses to be present with Him.....

In how He brought them with Him.....! in how they spoke with Him.....! and suddenly disappeared.....!

In His sudden appearance, and His sudden disappearance! How did they come with Him in a moment?! And how did they disappear in a moment?! Where did they come from?! And where did they go to?!

Yes, how was Christ the Lord able to bring Elijah, body and soul, from that place which we do not know, since he was elevated alive to heaven in a chariot of fire, out of the earth. (2 Kings 2:11). And we do not know to what place in heaven!

His calling Elijah to stand with Him on the mount of the Transfiguration, then his dismissal in a single moment, undoubtedly that refers to the power of His divinity.....

Then, how could He bring the soul of Moses, who was dead and buried, and "no one knows his grave to this day" (Deut. 34:6). It is known that the prophets and the righteous of the Old Testament were, before the Redemption, lying on hope, in their place of waiting "into the lower parts of the earth" (Eph. 4:9).

There is no doubt also that the calling of Elijah happened according to the power of His divinity.

The Lord willed to show to his disciples that He had put on this human body, simply out of His humility, and His self-abnegation.

But at that time, they did not understand His divine nature.

This glorious transfiguration was supposed to establish an equilibrium in the moral condition of the apostles when they will see the Lord at the time of His crucifixion, in an aspect which the prophet Isaiah described saying: "He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Is. 53:2).

All this is added to the testimony of the Father for Him, with a voice which they heard out of the cloud which overshadowed them, saying: "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Mark 9:7), (Luke 9:35).

This testimony of the Father was heard during the baptism of repentance when the Lord humbled Himself "(Matt. 3:17), (Luke 2:23). And this testimony was also heard during the glory of the Transfiguration.....

He is the beloved Son, whether in His humility or in His glory.....

GRADATION IN THE TRANSFIGURATION

The Lord Christ took steps in the revelation of His nature's transfiguration, even toward His saint apostles.

This Transfiguration on the mount of Tabor, was the simplest image of His Transfiguration, in spite of its magnificence and its glory, in its light and in the testimony of the Father from the cloud.

Another kind of the Lord's transfiguration was in His resurrection and His ascension.

That glorious Resurrection in which He rised with a glorious body, and was able to come out of the tomb while it was closed, and was able to enter to the apostles while the doors were closed (John 20:19), in a calm way that would not terrify them.

His ascension to heaven with a body that is over the level of the earth gravitation, is like His transfiguration". He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight ... while they looked steadfastly toward heaven" (Acts 1: 9-10). Our instructor the apostle saint Mark says about that: "So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).

This transfiguration in the resurrection and the ascension, happened in a manner which amazed them and made them feel His divinity, but it did not terrify them.....

But we see a frightful aspect in which the Lord appeared in the vision which the apostle saint John saw. It was said that: "His eyes (were) like a flame of fire and His voice as the sound of many waters out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength" (Apoc. 1: 14-16); to such a degree, that saint John, who is one of the three who saw the transfiguration on mount Tabor, could not bear this transfiguration with which the Lord appeared in the vision. Therefore he said: "I fell at His feet as dead" (Apoc. 1:17), the thing that made the Lord say to him: "Do not be afraid" that is the disciple who "was leaning on Jesus' bosom" (John 13: 23-25).

The last transfiguration will be in His second coming when "the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 14), "when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26), He "will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matt. 16:27), "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25: 31-32).

Verily the two expressions "His glory" and "His Father's glory" are overbearing to our understanding and our imagination!!

Do they mean the glory of His divinity?! Undoubtedly not. Because these peoples would not have been able to stand before Him and also

because He said: "When the Son of Man comes in His glory" (Matt. 25:31). And also "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels" (Matt. 16:27). And also He said: "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in his own glory, and His Father's" (Luke 9:26).

Therefore in the words of these expressions of glory, He speaks about the Son of Man, that is about His glory in His incarnation, meaning the transfiguration into glory of the nature of "the incarnated Word"

.....when He comes upon the clouds of heaven, in His second coming, to judge the living and the dead. As if He were saying to His disciples:

"Let not My humility in My incarnation, make you doubt of My divinity.

In spite of having "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man....." (Philippians 2: 7-8), nevertheless sometimes it was possible for Him to be "transfigured before them" (Mark 9:2), manifesting His divinity.....

This is as regards the Lord Christ, what then is it as regards us?

His Transfiguration was the firstfruits of the transfiguration of our human nature.

We say, in the Gregorian mass, about that: "You have blessed my nature in You" Yes He has blessed it with the glory which He has given to it.

WITH MOSES AND ELIJAH

Christ our Lord was not alone on the mount of the Transfiguration, but there were with Him, Moses and Elijah who appeared in glory (Luke 9:31).

It is evident here that the Lord does not refuse His glory to His sons.

It was said in the epistle to the Romans: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son these He also glorified" (Romans 8: 29-30).

The Lord said about His disciples to the Father: "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one" (John 17:22).

We note that each one of the three who were in glory on the mount of Transfiguration, had fasted forty days.

Probably this indicates that transfiguration is related to keeping away from material things.

It is known that the Lord Christ fasted forty days and forty nights (Matt. 4:2).

And Moses fasted forty days, when he was with God on the mountain to receive the Law from Him. "And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights" (Ex. 24:18).

And Elijah, when the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said: [Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you". So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God" (1 Kings 19: 7-8).

Moses and Elijah in their transfiguration, symbolised the whole human nature.

Likewise we note that in the parable of the ten foolish and wise virgins (Matt. 25:1), that the five wise virgins symbolised all the wise human beings in their virtuous way of life; and similarly the five foolish virgins symbolised all the human beings who do not, in their ignorance, prepare themselves for their eternal life and for meeting God.

In the same way the Lord gave us His Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah, as a symbol of the transfiguration which the Lord will grant to all human beings in eternity.

The variety which is represented by the two prophets Moses and Elijah:

1. Elijah represents the virgins (of either sex), and Moses represents the married. Rather Moses married more than once. He married Zipporah the daughter of the priest of Midian (Ex. 2: 19-22). He also married an Ethiopian woman (Num. 12:1), who was a symbol of the acceptance of the Gentiles.

All this is a symbol, because the transfiguration will equally be the destiny of the virgins and the married.

In the same manner, we find around the cross of the Lord: the Holy Virgin Mary, and the virgin apostle John. Likewise we find Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Cleopas and mother of Joses, Judah, and Simeon.

2. Moses represented those who were dead. And Elijah represented the living who have not yet died. That would symbolise, in the second coming of Christ, the dead who will rise, and the living who will be lifted up to the clouds, as saint Paul said in (1Thess.4:15-17):

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

All will be with the Lord those who were buried in the earth and remained under the earth until the day of the resurrection (John 5:29), and those who will be raised up to heaven as Elijah was raised up.

3. Elijah represents those who have lived a life of ascetism in the mountains, as he was himself on the mountain of Carmel; and Moses represents those who have lived in the world with their families in a social life.

4. One of them represents the life of monks, and the other represents the ministry and the guidance of crouds.

One of them is in the style of Mariam, and the other is in the style of Martha, with the difference in measuring all of these two kinds will be transfigured with the Lord

5. Some have said that Moses represents the Law, and Elijah represents the prophets; because Moses presented the Law, or the Judicial procedure, to the people, while Elijah was one of the prophets.

6. Moses represents meekness; and Elijah represents the fiery jealousy. The one represents forgiveness, and the other represents punishment

It was said about the prophet Moses that he: "was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). It was Moses who interceded for the people when the Lord wanted to destroy them, saying: "Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, and say: " He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountain s, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people" (Ex. 32: 11-12). He said also likewise: "Yet now, if You will forgive their sin, but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written" (Ex. 32:32).

But Elijah was the fiery man who said to each of the two captains of fifty: "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men" (2 Kings 1: 10,12). Likewise it was he who ordered the slaughter of the prophets of Baal and the prophets of

Asherah (1 Kings 18:40). It is he who said in his flaming anger: "there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word" (1 Kings 17:1). Yes, he is Elijah who reprimanded king Achab and said to him: "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed the Baals" (1Kings 18;18).

From this, we understand that both those who are meek, and those who are strong and firm, God will grant all of them the transfiguration in eternity, according to their kind.....

As if Christ our Lord says: "I shall assemble all of them to me in the transfiguration":

Him who was married, and him who was a virgin; him who lived the life of meditation, and him who lived the life of service; him who was meek and calm, and him who was firm and strong; him who lived on the mountain, and him who lived in the city. The important thing is that they live a life of righteousness All the kinds of righteous people are fit for the kingdom and will be transfigured in it, in spite of the difference in kind. Some were meek and interceded for the culprits for the sake of God; and some others were firm and strong and purified the earth from idolatry, and chastised the sinners in order to bring them to repentance, for the sake of God.

Although Moses represented one kind of righteous, and Elijah represented another kind, both of them participated in some qualities:

Each of them was a prophet to God. Each of them offered sacrifices to God. Each of them was holy and loved God and His kingdom, and was a man of God.

Each of them was a man of miracles: The prophet Moses divided the waters of the Red Sea (Exode 14); and brought down the manna and the quails from heaven for the people (Exode 16); and stroke the rock, and water sprang from it (Exode 17).

The prophet Elijah resurrected the son of the widow of Zarephath which belongs to Sidon, from death. He blessed the flour and the oil in the house of this widow, and they were sufficient during all the period of the famine. (1 Kings 17). He is the one who brought down rain by his prayer (1 Kings 18). He is the one who brought down fire from heaven, and it consumed the two captains and their fifties. (2 Kings 1).

Each one of both of them was courageous in his censure of a delinquent king. The prophet Moses rebuked Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Elijah rebuked Achab, king of Israel. (1 Kings 18: 18-19). He censured him likewise for the killing of Naboth the Jezreelite, and he warned him saying: "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall

lick your blood, even yours"; and he said to him: "you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 21: 19,20).

Each one of both of them was a cause of salvation for the people in his days. The prophet Moses delivered the people from the bondage to Pharaoh. The prophet Elijah delivered them from the famine, and participated in their salvation from idolatry.

Each one of both of them had spiritual experiences in the life of the mountains: The prophet Moses remained with God forty days on the mount Horeb. The prophet Elijah had his spiritual experience on the mount Carmel.

God also glorified both of them. The Lord said about the prophet Moses while He was reprimanding Aaron and Mariam because they had spoke against him: "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord" (Num. 12: 6-8). He glorified him likewise in many wonders and miracles. He rather said to him: "See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet" (Ex. 7:1).

The Lord also dignified Elijah with the miracles, and likewise by lifting him alive to heaven in a chariot of fire: "suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11).

Each one of both of them was exposed to fear. Moses was frightened at the beginning of his life when he had killed the Egyptian man, and then he ran away from the face of Pharaoh (Ex. 2: 14-15). Elijah ran away from the face of the queen Jezabel; and he said to the Lord, in an attempt to justify his flight: "the children of Israel killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life" (1 Kings 19:14).

I would like to say on this occasion, that the prophet Elijah is not John the Baptist, as those who believe in reincarnation say.

Because Elijah did not die, and his soul did not go out of his body in order to return to incarnation in the person of John the Baptist. Likewise when they asked John the Baptist saying: ["Are you Elijah?" He said: "I am not"] (John 1:21). John the Baptist was a well known personality in that time. If he had appeared with the Lord on the mount of the Transfiguration, the apostles would have recognised him, and Peter would not have said: "Lord, it is good for us to be here, if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matt. 17:4).

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR HUMAN NATURE

The Lord who has taken the weakness of our human nature, blessed this nature, and will grant to it transfiguration and glory in the resurrection. In this matter, the apostle said about our Lord Jesus- Christ:

"who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21).

What is it then that will happen to that human body in the resurrection? The apostle says:

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15: 42-44).

"And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man" (1 Cor. 15:49).

"for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality". Death will then be transformed into victory, and we shall say: "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?!" (1 Cor. 15: 52-55).

"Then human beings will be "like angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:30), as the Lord has said.

Our glorified body in the resurrection, will be a body that does not hunger nor thirst, nor get tired nor become ill, nor will die nor will be corrupted; but rather will be elevated upward in the transfiguration of the human nature.

How will be the new nature of our bodies that will become spiritual heavenly bodies?!

Will they move as the angels who pass on from heaven to earth in the twinkle of an eye? Will they possess the spiritual perception instead of the ordinary vision?

How will they eat from the hidden manna as the Lord promised (Apoc. 2:17)? And how will they "eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God"? (Apoc. 2:7).

And what are the "white garments" in which they will be clothed in eternity? (Apoc. 3:5).

And how will they sit with the Son on His throne, as He also sat down with His Father on His throne? (Apoc. 3:21).

Hence the transfiguration of our bodies in the resurrection is marvelous! And our spiritual heavenly nature will be marvelous, far away from the nature of flesh and blood.

And when our human nature will be transfigured in eternity, it will not be transfigured only in the body

but also in the soul.....

There will be no weakness in the soul, as before, when the soul weakened and submitted to the body. And as we say now in the prayer of the third hour: "Deliver us from the impurity of the body and the soul". And as we say in the prayer of the divine mass: "Purify our souls, our bodies, and our spirits". Because the soul becomes impure when it submits to the body and when it participates with it in its faults and its desires. But in the resurrection, the soul becomes transfigured. How is that?

There will be laid upon her the crown of righteousness.

That about which the apostle saint Paul said: "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

The meaning of the crown of righteousness is, that the human being will afterwards commit no more sin .

Neither the soul will commit sin, nor the body will commit sin.....

The human nature will become infallible, because it will have been crowned with righteousness.....

It will have become like the angels of God in heaven, not sinning. And the word of the apostle saint John about whomever is borne of God that "he cannot sin", will apply to them.

In the transfiguration of the soul, not only it will not sin, for that is a negative side! But what will it be from the positive side?

What will be its knowledge for example? Here is the apostle saying: "Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). What then will be the knowledge of the soul after having got rid of the fog from the surrounding matter? Will the word of the Lord in His conversation with the Father be applied to them: "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God....." (John 17:3)?

How will the soul grow in knowledge, and in the love of God, and in joining Him, and in the relation with the angels and the saints' souls? How will it be transfigured in its light? What glory will it obtain?

Undoubtedly, it will return to the image and the resemblance of God as it was created in the beginning (Gen. 1: 26-27), but far away from union with material things.

That is the transfiguration of the human nature, when it will be lifted up over the level of material things, and also over the level of the participation with flesh and blood, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50).

Thus is the human nature in transfiguration: when it enters into the perpetual spiritual life, and in the spiritual pleasure which is the property of the sons of God.

God will give man a kind of transfiguration in his nature, whether as regards the body or as regards the soul. We should like here to give some examples in order to explain the transfiguration in a simple manner.

SOME EXAMPLES OF TRANSFIGURATION

An evident example: the three young men in the fiery burning furnace.

When they cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego bound in the midst of the fiery burning furnace, this latter was exceedingly heated, to the point that the flame killed the men who took up these three young men" (Dan. 3: 22-23).

In spite of that, they saw the three young men who were not hurt and walking in the fire. "and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them" (Dan. 3: 25-27).

How then did that happen? Verily the fourth was with them, He that was said of Him: "and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Dan. 3:26). He had kept them from the fire, and it had no power over them. But how is that?

He gave to their bodies a kind of transfiguration, so that fire would have no power over them.

That is quite evident, because if their bodies were at that time in the same ordinary material nature which is consumed by fire, it would have been possible for the fire to consume them. But they were given that transfiguration in which they became unconsumable.

But the transfiguration of the bodies of the three young men was for a time.

That is for a definite period, which is the period when they were inside the fiery furnace. But when they came out of it, their bodies returned to their natural position.

That is of course something else than the transfiguration of our bodies in eternity, where they will perpetually be spiritual incorruptible bodies. That is not intended to mean that we shall take other bodies, but they will be the same bodies, but with another nature. They will take from God, a power, and some characteristics which will be superior to material things.

We present another example, which is coal that has been heated with fire:

A piece of black coloured coal, that would make dirty any hand which touches it, because of the fine dust which it leaves upon his fingers. When it is burned with fire, we see that it is sparkling, and it becomes illuminating, and its colour becomes red, like the colour of fire, and that it has lost its blackness, and whoever touches it will burn his fingers because of its heat.

That is a kind of transfiguration for the piece of coal. It did not lose its carbonic nature, but with this transfiguration, it took some other characteristics, among which are sparkling, heat, and the disappearance of the black colour.....

A similar example to a certain point, is iron when it is heated by fire.....

It is the same iron in its nature, but it gains some other characteristics because of its union with fire, as regards heat, the change of colour, the possibility to be beaten and turned into different forms. It obtains some transfiguration which removes it far away from its black image.

Another example is oil in a lamp:

It is the same oil. Its nature has not changed. But with a stick of matches, it is transformed into fire and light, and becomes a source of illumination. Is not that a kind of transfiguration?! It has not the same form as before, but rather it is transfigured into a light that illuminates.....

OTHER KINDS OF TRANSFIGURATION

We have mentioned before, that the human nature obtains a kind of transfiguration in the general resurrection, when it will be clothed with spiritual heavenly incorruptible bodies, and human beings will become like the angels of God in heaven. But there are some kinds of transfiguration which happen here in life upon the earth, among which there is:

The transfiguration of thinking.

Sometimes thinking is lucid and bright, bringing out extremely ravishing thoughts. That happens to a poet whose imagination and thinking becomes radiant in writing a poem of verse; or to a writer who composes a story or a novel while he is at the top of his creative capacity, in a state of transfiguration, in the depth of intelligence, and the depth of imagination.....

These are kinds of transfiguration in the fields of many arts and gifts.

It happens to an artist, or a designer, or a sculptor, or a musician, or a poet, or a novelist. Any one of these gifted people presents a marvelous masterpiece whose author is then described that he was in a state of transfiguration in his feelings and senses and thinking, during the production.

All these cases may be for a moment, during the production and the fabrication, and may be representing a case of perpetual transfiguration of gifts, and may appear even in infancy.

Yes, undoubtedly, gifts are transfigurations which God grants to man.

Because gifts are extraordinary capabilities that God gives. They are of many kinds which the apostle saint Paul mentioned in the twelfth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians saying:

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Cor. 12: 7-11).

A human being may be transfigured as regards certain definite spiritual qualities.

In human touches which he possesses, and which have a singular characteristic as regards their realisation; in mercy for instance or tenderness or commiseration, or the forgiveness of offenders. As we read about that in some stories about the saint Amba Abram, the bishop of Fayoum, or the saint Amba Sarabamoun, the bishop of Menoufiah, or the saint Amba Roueiss.

This transfiguration may appear in the thoughts or the responses of some saints, as it was mentioned in the words of the saint Amba Antonios, or the sayings of many fathers, which were registered in "the Paradise of the Monks" Words at which, man stands amazed, and meditates upon their depth, and says: "Undoubtedly, this was a case of transfiguration in which the fathers pronounced what they said, so that the generations have preserved their words.....!"

The case of transfiguration could be one of the great works of grace in man.

As the apostle saint Paul said: ", "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10).

Extraordinary capabilities and gifts are transfigured in man as a result of the work of grace.

His image is granted a form that amazes those who see him as a result of transfiguration.

It was said about saint Stephanos in the story of his martyrdom, that during his trial before the congregation of the Jews:

"And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15).

Sometimes it happens during certain dreams that we see a person whom we know, in a wonderful image or in a lightful form, although we did not see him like that in his earthly life. But he appears to you during the dream in a state of transfiguration.

THE TRANSFIGURATION IS THE PLEDGE OF THE KINGDOM

All the cases of transfiguration on the earth, whether for a moment or in a perpetual way, are nothing but the pledge of the eternal transfiguration in the kingdom..... They are a kind of tasting the kingdom, and the gifts of the richness of the glory of God.....

In the story of the Transfiguration, we note the amazement of Peter with what he had seen on earth.

Then he said his well-known expression: "Lord, it is good for us to be here, if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matt. 17:4). But Christ our Lord did not agree with him about that.....

It is not good that we be here on earth, and that we make for ourselves tabernacles to live in that material world What you see, O Peter, is simply a taste of the pleasures in eternity..... in heaven, in the spiritual heavenly body. Enjoy then the scene of transfiguration which you see. But let your thoughts be in what will be, which is far more magnificent.

Therefore it was said about the words which Peter said: "because he did not know what to say" (Mark 9:6).....!

THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

We are happy to celebrate the feast of the transfiguration, and we consider it one of the Lord's feasts in the Church. We are glad with it not only simply for the Transfiguration of Christ on mount Tabor, but we are the more glad for the transfiguration which will be in eternity, and the gifts which we will obtain in it, like the angels of God in heaven.

It is not profitable to consider the feast of the Transfiguration as regards the events which happened in it, but rather as regards its symbols and meanings.

With this we come to the depth of the feast, and the depth of its meanings.....

With this, we will have spiritual meditations in transfiguration:

As regards the Transfiguration of the Lord, and His divinity in the Transfiguration.

As regards the transfiguration of Moses and Elijah as a pledge of the transfiguration of humanity.

As regards the transfiguration of the human nature after the resurrection.

The transfiguration which we obtain on earth, and the relation between that and the gifts of the Spirit.

The Christ our Lord was transfigured on the mount of Tabor before three of his disciples, and with Him there were two of His prophets who "spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31).

As for the permanent transfiguration, it will be in the heavenly Jerusalem, where God will be in the midst of His people, in Jerusalem, "coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Apoc. 21: 1-4) where God will make everything new. Yes. "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Apocalypse 22:20).