

We find this gospel reading with 3 evangelists; Matteos, Luke and Markos and although we have only read the gospel of Saint Matteos here, I also include the testimonies of the other 2 evangelists in this sermon.

Jesus takes his most faithful disciples and leads them up the mountain, on the difficult path of the askese. And then His appearance changes into light, the evangelist Matteos talks about that He shone like the sun and that His clothes became white as light, Markos speaks of whiter than snow and Luke also writes in those terms. Earthly descriptions for an otherworldly phenomenon. And then there appear Moses and Elijah . Moses represents the law, the Jewish law, and all who have passed away, and Elijah represents the prophets and, since he did not die, the living. They all testify here that Christ is the Messiah, the fulfillment of the Old Testament. And what are Moses, Elijah and Christ talking about? About the things to come; the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

All of this is too much for the disciples, The Light, the Prophets, and they fall to the ground, hide their faces, and then propose to build 3 huts so that Jesus, Moses and Elijah have shelter. The other evangelist calls it altars, as long as it is something concrete, something tangible. Something they are familiar with. They cannot bear to see the Uncreated Light. The Light also shines on their impure hearts and it is too much! And then there is the Luminous Cloud from which the voice of the Father resounds; This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to Him! And with that, the Holy Trinity is present. The voice of the Father, the Son in a body and the Holy Spirit in the Luminous Cloud.

The light we are dealing with here is the Uncreated Light that Saint Gregorios Palamas spoke of. It is the energy of God, an expression of God, but not his being. Saint John Chrysostomos preached extensively on it for 3 hours, and it is written down, handed down to us. He explains that the Transfiguration foreshadows Christ's Second Coming, at the end of time, when He will appear in all His Glory with all His Angels, the Cherubim and the Seraphim. That means that the Transfiguration on the Mount was not only meant to strengthen the disciples for the things to come, the crucifixion and the Resurrection, but Christ here also gives a glimpse of what it will be like at the end times. Then there will be Light, The Divine Light to a far greater degree than what we see here, for then Christ will appear in His full Glory.

The striking part is that this event turns out to be an expression of *economia*. God does not give His disciples more than they can handle, He only gives it to them in a short moment and that is already overwhelming. Likewise, God does not give us more than we can handle. We know of course the word *economia* primarily as an easing of the rule, especially the fasting rule, but the deeper meaning of this word is that God, in His desire that we ascend to His Divine Nature, descends to our nature. He gives us a rule, something concrete that we can understand, like the disciples with their huts, and if it is still too

much for us, He eases up on that rule again, without retreating, His Grace keeps coming! That is *economia*, an expression of God's love for man.

In this light, I came across something enlightening in the book *Every Day Saints*, where Blaise Pascal is quoted, who was not Orthodox, but who knew it anyway. He said: "Appearing openly to those who seek Him with all their heart, while He hides Himself from those who run away from Him with all their heart; God regulates human knowledge of His presence. He gives signs visible to those who seek Him, and He is invisible to those who are indifferent to Him. To those who want to see, God gives sufficient light; to those who will not see, He gives sufficient darkness."

Back to Mount Tabor. What is that Light? By nature it is not a physical light, although it may indeed become physical, as on Mount Thabor and as with Saint Seraphim and Saint John Maximowitch. But it is the light through which we can see spiritually. As long as our hearts are pure. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God"; that's what it says in scripture. If only we struggle to purify our hearts of all desires that are not of God, then we will be able to see the Light, The Light of Tabor, the Divine Light. And, yes, then there is *economia*; it will be given to us to the extent that we can bear it. Because God loves mankind.