

WEEKLY MEDITATION

Transfiguration and Dormition

I find the time between the feast of the Transfiguration and the feast of the Dormition to be very rich in the interplay of crucial spiritual themes.

Both are feasts of death. The first comes before the death of Christ and anticipates it. The second commemorates death, and comes after the death and resurrection of Christ.

The Transfiguration was a gift to the disciples Peter, James and John in anticipation of the suffering and death of the Lord. It was meant to give them something - some hope - to see them through their experience of holy week, in order to strengthen them in the face of death of their Master. *Thy disciples beheld Thy glory as far as they could see it; so that when they would behold Thee crucified, they would understand that Thy suffering was voluntary.... (Kontakion)*

The Dormition is a death that becomes a gift, a gift of hope, because it reveals that death is no longer the master and great anxiety of our lives, but is itself subject to the power of the love of God in Christ. It is as if theory is here manifest and demonstrated in practice. The reality and power of the resurrection of Christ is applied to our common human life in the person of the Mother of God. What is proclaimed as Gospel - the risen Christ, the Lord of Life, trampling death by death - is experienced here in the reality of the believer's new life in Christ. *For being the Mother of Life, she was translated to life by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb (Kontakion)*

Both are feasts of hope. The hope of the Transfiguration is that in spite of appearances, the Lord is Lord, and on the other side of betrayal, suffering and death is the resurrection and ascension. The hope of the Dormition is that in spite of appearances, death is for believers a falling asleep, a letting go in an act of love and trust, a departure or 'translation' into the arms of the risen and glorified Life-Giver.

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