

## Matthew 17-18

### **Matthew 16: 21**

From the day Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Master “*began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.*”

- Peter scorns this prediction,
- Nor do the others understand it any better than he (cf. Mt 17:23; Lk 9:45)

This is the first of five times that Jesus tells the disciples of His suffering and death: 16:21; 24; 17:9; 17:12; 17:22

In this context the mysterious episode of Jesus’ Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain,

- **Matthew 17:1-8**

Before three witnesses chosen by Himself; Peter, James and John,

- Jesus’ face and clothes become dazzling with light,
- Moses and Elijah appear, speaking “of His **departure**, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem.”(**Luke 9:31**)
- A cloud covers Him
- And a voice from heaven says: “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to Him.” (Lk 9:35)

For a moment Jesus discloses His divine glory,

- confirming Peter’s confession.

He also reveals that **He will have to go by the way of the Cross** at Jerusalem in order to “enter into His glory.” (Luke 24:26)

- and so will we

**Moses and Elijah**, the Law and the Prophets, had announced the Messiah’s sufferings (see Luke 24:27)

- Christ’s suffering and death is the will of the Father:
- the Son acts as God’s suffering servant (**Isaiah 42:1**)
- The cloud indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit.

**St. Thomas STh III, 45, 4, ad 2**

“The whole Trinity appeared: the Father in the voice; the Son in the man; the Spirit in the shining cloud.”

**Byzantine Liturgy** on the feast of the Transfiguration prays:

“You were transfigured on the mountain, and your disciples, as much as they were capable of it, beheld your glory, O Christ our God, so that when they should see you crucified they would understand that your Passion was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that you truly are the splendor of the Father.”

On the threshold of the public life: **the baptism;**

On the threshold of the Passover: **the Transfiguration.**

**Jesus’ baptism** proclaimed “the mystery of the first regeneration,”

- Namely, our Baptism

**The Transfiguration** “is the sacrament of the second regeneration”:

- Our own Resurrection. (St. Thomas)
- From now on we share in the Lord’s Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments.

**The Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ’s glorious coming,** when he “will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body.”

**But it also recalls that**

“it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God.”

**Acts 14:22**

**Augustine**

“Peter did not yet understand this when he wanted to remain with Christ on the mountain. It has been reserved for you, Peter, but for after death. For now, Jesus says, “God down to toil on earth, to serve on earth, to be scorned and crucified on earth. Life goes down to be killed; Bread goes down to suffer hunger; the Way goes down to be exhausted on his journey; the Spring goes down to suffer thirst; and you refuse to suffer?”

Matthew 16:21 1<sup>st</sup> announcement of the Way of the Cross

- Peter doesn't get it
- Then the Master explains: the Cross is necessary
- It is the Way to the destination:

The destination is our own Transfiguration; transformation; divinization

- **Romans 8:14-25**

The Transfiguration is a sneak-preview of

1. The destination – Heaven
2. What God will do to us “change our lowly body to be like his glorious body.” Philippians 3:21

*“Provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”*

This sneak-preview comes right in the midst of the Jesus informing us that we must go by Way of the Cross

- The Via Dolorosa

**What is the Way of the Cross?**

- It is the Way of Love

Fulfilling my duties and responsibilities with love and joy

Accepting what I cannot change:

Suffering, sickness, temptation, failure, weakness, imperfections, set-backs

Doing the good even when I don't want to

Avoiding evil even when I have strong feelings toward it

Bearing with one another in love

Denying my disordered desires in order to live balance

To be patient, kind, not jealous or boastful

Not arrogant or rude

Not insisting on your own way

Not irritable or resentful

Refusing to rejoice at wrong, but rejoicing in the right

To bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things

1 Corinthians 13:4ff

It is compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, patience,  
forbearing one another,  
and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other,  
as the Lord has forgiven you,  
so you also must forgive. (Col 3:12)

**Through these, through the Cross, we put on love and are transfigured**

- “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” **Mt 13:43**
- “When Christ is revealed we will be like him, for we shall see him as He is.” **1 John 3:2**

**If we hope to reach this we must keep our eyes fixed on the goal:**

- **Heaven**

**St. Thomas teaches** that for one to advance along a particular path, it is important to know the destination beforehand, *“just as the archer does not accurately launch an arrow without first looking at the target. This is necessary, above all, when the road is rough and hazardous, and the path laborious. It is fitting, therefore, for Christ to reveal to his disciples the splendor of his glory, to become transfigured before them, since in the same glory he would one day transfigure them.”* ST, 2 q 45, a1

**For a Christian, the passing of time is in no way a tragedy.**

On the contrary, it shortens the distance we need to travel before our long awaited meeting with God.

**The disciples were profoundly shaken by the experience of witnessing the Passion.** For this reason, the Lord leads three of them, the ones who were to accompany him in his agony in Gethsemane, to the summit of Mt. Tabor, so that they can contemplate his glory.

**St. Leo the Great**, “The Lord was transfigured, that He might take away the scandal of the Cross from the hearts of his Disciples.” For it was these same three who witnessed also the Agony in the Garden.

## **Matthew 17:24-27**

Peter is asked: Does you teacher pay the temple tax?

**Peter says**, “Yes.”

When he gets home **Jesus spoke to him** saying,  
“From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their sons or from others?”

**Peter replied**, “From others.”

**Jesus said to him**, “Peter, I’m the Son of the Father. I don’t pay the tax.”

**Peter**, “Oh, yea...right.”

**Jesus**, “But now you have bound me to this in this instance so,  
“Go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel; take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.”

### **Jesus is the Son of God: He does not pay the temple tax**

But Jesus had conferred the power to “bind and loose on” on Peter in 16:19

- “I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Peter has bound Christ to pay it in this instance and Christ does.

- This is a striking example of the power “to bind and loose.”
- Jesus associates Peter with Himself as His Prime Minister

But it is not to be forever (the Church does not pay tax) so Christ does not give Peter a coin from His purse but provides a coin miraculously from a fish.

## **Matthew 18:1-4**

**S. Jerome** says that our Lord took a child as an example because He wanted to teach the disciples humility.

“Because they saw that the same piece of money had paid the tribute both for the Lord and Peter, from the equality of the payment, they thought Peter was preferred above the rest of the Apostles. Therefore they asked, *Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* Jesus knowing their

thoughts, and understanding the cause of their error, desired to heal the desire of glory by teaching them to battle in **humility**.”

**S. Antony** saw in spirit the whole world full of snares and traps, and souls who desired to fly to heaven caught in them, and being ensnared by the demons, thrust into hell. He cried out with groans, *O Lord, who shall escape all these snares?*

- He heard the answer, *Humility shall escape them all.*

The way, therefore, to Heaven is humility.

- Matthew 18:4 “Whoever *humbles* himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

**S. Bonaventure** writing the life of S. Francis says that there once was seen a lofty and glorious throne among the Seraphim, and a voice was heard which said, “*This seat is kept for the lowly Francis.*”

**Pride:** acting as though you are more important than you really are.

**St. Gregory lists four kinds of Pride:**

1. Thinking that one’s good is from oneself;
2. Thinking that one’s good is from God but is owed to one as a reward. “I deserve this or that.”
3. Claiming excellence not possessed.
4. Despising others and wishing to seem the exclusive possessor of what one has.

**St. Jose Marie Escriva** “Allow me to remind you of evident signs of a lack of humility”: Always wanting to get your own way; Thinking that what you do or say is better than what others do or say; Arguing when you are not right; Arguing when you are right but with bad manners or insisting stubbornly; Giving your opinion without being asked, when charity does not demand you to do so; Despising the point of view of others; Not being aware that all the gifts and qualities you have are on loan; Feeling anxiety and fear (a lack of trust); Mentioning yourself as an example in conversation; Speaking badly about yourself, so that they may form a good opinion of you; Making excuses when rebuked; Hearing praise with satisfaction, or being glad that others have spoken well of you; Being hurt that others are held in greater esteem than you; Refusing to carry out menial tasks; Seeking or wanting to be singled out; Dropping words of self-praise in conversation, or words that might show your wit or skill, or your professional prestige; Being ashamed of not having certain possessions.

**Pride:** There is good pride: the satisfaction in one's own goodness or the goodness of others. We are not speaking of that here.

### **Vice of Pride**

- The pleasure of being above the rest
- Acting as though you are more important than you really are.
- Pride is the anti-realistic denial of the relationship between creature and creator
  
- The sin is not in the desire to excel.
- To excel for the love of God and the good of others is a virtue: Magnanimity.
  
- The sin is to want to be above the rest purely for the pleasure or power of being above the rest.
  
- It sets a man in competition with God and with others.

**Timidity, shyness, self-consciousness** is also a form of pride  
We are paralyzed by the thought, "What will others say or think of me."  
It is the fear of doing things before others.

### **What is Humility?**

Man's estimation of himself according to truth, and that is almost all there is to it.

### **Humility primarily relates to God**

- I understand my complete dependence on God
- I am grateful
- Christ to Catherine of Sienna: "I am He who is; you are she who is not."
- I take my focus off myself and turn it to God and others.
- Everything I do is for the honor and glory of God and the good of others
- Not for my glory, or power or pleasure!

### **Secondly it relates to my fellow man**

### **Once we recognize God's presence in others**

- Each and every person is made in the image and likeness of God
- The entire Trinity dwells in each person in the state of grace
- The Son of God died for each and every person
  - Then we will do all we can to **honor** and **serve** those around us

### **Concretely:**

- Humility is trying to take the focus off oneself

### **You want to be humble:**

- take the focus off yourself
- Don't evaluate anything on how it was for you
- Turn your vision on God and your neighbor
- Try to forget yourself

### **This does not exclude magnanimity/high-mindedness**

- Humility doesn't mean self-debasement
- Humility is not meanness or lowness, degradation
- You refuse to degrade yourself
  
- The humble man is aware of the great destiny to which he is called and he will scorn meanness.
- The humble man has the loftiest aspirations: he will not settle for anything less than infinity:
  - to be a child of God and to do the things a son of God will do.
  - It is Holy Ambition

**18:10** We should never, forget our Guardian angels. **Padre Pio Story.**

### **18:18**

CCC 553 Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: The "power of the keys" designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church.

The power to bind and loose, found again here in 18:18, connotes the authority to

1. absolve sins
2. pronounce doctrinal judgments
3. make disciplinary decisions in the Church.

**Matthew 18:23-35**      *Parable of the Merciless Servant*

As Christ teaches about the importance of forgiveness, He gives the example of a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. He brought in a man who owed a great deal of money and forgave him the debt. The forgiven man in turn went out and met one of his fellow servants, who owed him but a fraction of the amount, and demanded repayment. The just king summoned his slave back and said:

“You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart” (Mt 18:32-35)

**18: 33 sums up this parable:** “Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant Just as I had pity on you.”

- By His death on the Cross, Jesus forgave the infinite debt to God’s justice that each one of us owed.
- Christ has already forgiven the person who harms us with their sin.
- **“It is finished.”**
- Christ has warned us five times that we will only be forgiven to the degree to which we forgive.

**This is also a reference to Purgatory**

“You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart” (Mt 18:32-35)

“I have forgiven you – yet you have not purified your heart of selfishness, and a disordered love for created things. Thus you must be cleansed of this before entrance into perfect union with God.”