

This Mysterious episode of Jesus' Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain, Mount Tabor, before three chosen witnesses: Peter, James and John. Jesus' face and clothes become dazzling with light, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking "of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem". A cloud covers him and a voice from heaven says: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" A glorious theophany – manifestation of the Trinity. The voice is that of God the Father; the cloud a symbol of the Holy Spirit; and Jesus who will "enter into his glory". Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets who had announced the Messiah's sufferings and death. The purpose of this event was to encourage these apostles lest they lose hope on account of fear. They needed to 'stay awake' to see the Lord in glory. We need to remain spiritually awake in this life to see Him in the next. Being prayerful is the best way to maintain a spirit of alertness. But Jesus said 'do not be afraid.' Fear is an emotion of which there are eleven. They are part of the human psyche and connect the life of the senses with the mind. Fear or phobia is a negative emotion, in that it makes the person withdraw from an impending evil. An evil that is not actually present. The object of fear is not really present, the harm has not actually happened, yet we fear its arrival. e.g. fear of being bitten by a snake or wasp or fear of flying (it's not the flying but the impending crash of the plane). The best way to overcome normal fears is prayer. We can react in diverse ways to fear: some freeze others flee (fight or flight scenario). When Abraham was called by God, 'Leave your country, your family...I will make you a great nation' he was in his seventies. No doubt he felt fear, at having to leave his comfort zone, family and friends at that stage in his life. But he prayed and went. St Joseph when told by the angel to flee lest Herod kill the child must have experienced some fear. He had a choice: be frozen by the fear and eventually succumb to the imminent attack or flee to Egypt. After much prayer his will was bolstered by fortitude or courage to enable him to do God's will. But in Gethsemane, St. Peter failed to pray when asked that later led to his denial of the Lord. How often do some people give up when their fears seem to overwhelm them. Instead, we must pray and be earnest in courage lest we give up and are conquered by our fears. Courage is a cardinal virtue that needs to be cultivated from a young age. It strengthens the will giving it tenacity and vigour in difficult times and trials. In the words of St Paul, in adversity we need to rely on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy – so be not afraid.