

Navigating Modern Discipleship: Shedding Light on the Major Understanding of Transformation

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Abstract: This article explores the general discourse on transformation for Christian discipleship. It delves into various aspects, such as disciple transformation, discipleship's dignity, and dependence on grace. The article highlights the importance of prayer, listening to God, and preparing for the challenges of discipleship in today's world. It emphasizes that the Transfiguration event affirms the divinity of Jesus, calls for spiritual discipline, and invites humanity to share in Jesus' glory. Overall, the article underscores the significance of the Transfiguration as a transformative and guiding experience for contemporary disciples.

Keywords: Transfiguration, Christian discipleship, Human Dignity, Conversion, Disciple transformation, and Spiritual disciplines

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Introduction

The “Transfiguration Account,” as narrated in the Gospel of Luke 9:28-36, serves as a profound and timeless invitation to explore the implications of discipleship. It beckons humanity to delve into the depths of faith, transformation, and the divine call that resonates through the ages. The human journey through this sacred moment on the mountaintop is confronted with essential questions about what it truly means to follow the path of Jesus. This article tackles a profound exploration of the Transfiguration’s implications for discipleship. It begins by unraveling the concept of discipleship transformation, delving into the intimate connection between the disciples’ journey and the revelation of Jesus’ divine glory, and witnessing their fear and confusion, reflecting the challenges inherent in following a Christ who continually reveals new facets of His identity. Grasping the significance of patience and trust in the disciples’ journey, magnified by Jesus’ admonition to keep the revelation to themselves until after His resurrection. The exploration extends to the profound longing for the divine that silently stirs within every human soul, beckoning humanity to shed the old selves and embrace transformation. The human contemplates the role of prayer as the medium through which salvation and liberation find expression, allowing humanity to reach higher spiritual goals. Throughout this narrative, humanity is reminded that it is not the disciple alone who effects change but rather the divine grace that initiates and sustains the transformation.

The article further unravels the concept of discipleship’s dignity and its profound dependence on divine grace. Reflecting on how humanity’s fallen nature, marked by sin and temptation, does not diminish our intrinsic dignity. Instead, it emphasizes the role of God’s grace in restoring the image and likeness of the Divine within humanity. The article explores how grace and human cooperation are key elements in conversion, transformation, and the pursuit of justice. As they navigate the implications of the Transfiguration for discipleship in today’s world context, men encounter the essential role of faith, prayer, and listening to God. Realizing that the event on the mountaintop is not a chronological relic but a living testament to the abiding relationship between humanity and the divine. Finding inspiration to face the challenges of discipleship in the modern world, drawing strength from the promise of sharing in Jesus’ glory and eternal life. This profound journey through the Transfiguration, where discipleship takes on new meaning and relevance in today’s complex and ever-changing world. Delving into the rich tapestry of faith and transformation will uncover the enduring truths illuminating the human path as followers of the one transfigured on that sacred mountain, Jesus Christ.

This study adopts an objective and systematic approach to investigate the significance of the Transfiguration of Jesus, specifically in Luke 9:28-36, employing a qualitative research design and redaction criticism methods. The research methodology begins with exploring to highlight the significance of the Transfiguration in the context of discipleship. It emphasizes how the event encourages individuals to question what leads them to witness the Divine Glory of Jesus beyond their familial relationship with him. Information for this contextual understanding is sourced from relevant books, and articles, opinions from the Church's Fathers. The primary research focus centers on the major understanding of transformation to reveal redactional tendencies, utilizing a comprehensive approach to elucidate the multifaceted aspects of the Transfiguration narrative. This methodology integrates insights from relevant literature, and the socio-historical context, aiming to offer a thorough and profound understanding of illuminating discipleship's divine path in the modern world.

Disciple Transformation

The Initiation into Discipleship through Transfiguration

The presence of Peter, James, and John underscores the Transfiguration's significance concerning discipleship. This event prompts a fundamental question: beyond their familial connection with Jesus, what aspects of Jesus' disciples pressed their individuals to experience the profound Divine Glory of Jesus clearly and concretely? This transformative event serves as a call to discipleship: Jesus specifically selects these three disciples for a significant initiation or invitation, indicating a pivotal moment. The disciples' reactions, fear, and confusion mirror the challenge of truly following Jesus. Their perception of Jesus undergoes a profound shift from what they previously knew, realizing He embodies much more than anticipated. Jesus' instruction for secrecy about the event until after His resurrection highlights the importance of patience and trust in God's plan in following Him.¹ The pursuit and constant struggle of the faithful (today's disciples) is to reform their lives by moving from their old selves to the new life as a consequence of following the Lord.² However, even before responding to God's call, men silently and subtly long for the Divine and God's love.³ The desire to change the old ways is a response to the call of the Lord to go deeper in prayer and to be transformed, and God will make one holy

¹ Greg Lanier, "Why Did Jesus Command Others to Be Silent About Him?" *The Gospel Coalition*. July 21, 2020. Accessed May 7, 2024. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jesus-command-others-silent-messianic-secret/>. Cf. Mark 9:9.

² Cf. Ephesians 4:22.

³ John Piper, "Consider Your Calling." *Desiring God*. April 25, 2010. Accessed May 7, 2024. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/consider-your-calling>. Cf. Also, St. Augustine.

as the author of his vocation is.⁴ The challenge to change is always the spirit's interior movement, whose foremost author and finisher is the Lord.⁵ However, the faithful might be wondering why there is a need to endure the challenge of the Christian faith by suffering. Questions should arise from the what, how, and why things fell into such a condition wherein transformation, commitment, and strong will become important in responding to the graciousness of God.

True liberation manifests itself in the embrace of Jesus Christ, and the most profound transformation arises when humanity actively encounters a life united with Christ. Through our cooperation, we are elevated to a higher existence, transcending all worldly limitations by the grace of Jesus Christ. The human no longer lives as an ordinary creature, but in the divinity of Jesus Christ, he has been set free from sin and brought to perfect freedom; in him, everything is changed to be our authentic self, for only God can bring deliverance and salvation.⁶ From this perspective, humanity can achieve a higher goal in the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ. It is humanity's potential to achieve a higher spiritual state by undergoing a transformative journey toward spiritual enlightenment and fulfillment.⁷ And the way to express salvation and liberation is through prayer. In prayer, individuals unite with the divine realm, seeking guidance, redemption, and sovereignty from earthly limitations and spiritual bondage.⁸ The narrative in Luke about the Transfiguration intertwines divine and human elements. The profound association between the divine and human realms emphasizes Jesus's divine nature while highlighting his humanity. This integration suggests that humanity's journey towards spiritual transformation is deeply intertwined with the divine presence and intervention. After initiating the transformation process, God declares Jesus as His Son, a message for all to hear. Initially, the disciples are captivated by the vision, desiring to remain in that moment, seeking a closer connection and communion with God that feels distant from their current state. "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."⁹ After witnessing the Lord's glory, the disciples enjoyed abundance in everything and freedom from death and evil. The disciples were granted by God wonderfully and uniquely, wherein all the features

⁴ Theology of Work Project, "The Call to Belong to Christ and Participate in His Redemptive Work in the World." *Theology of Work*. 2014. Accessed May 7, 2024. <https://www.theologyofwork.org/key-topics/vocation-overview-article/types-of-gods-calling/#toc>. Cf. 1 Peter 1:16.

⁵ Pope Paul VI, "*Dei Verbum*." Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 1965, Ch. 1:5. Cf. Philippians 2:13.

⁶ International Theological Commission, "Human Development and Christian Salvation." *Origins*, NC Documentary Service, Vol. 7, No. 20 (November 3, 1977): 306-313.

⁷ Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ* (New York: Image Books-Helicon Press, 1948).

⁸ International Theological Commission, "Human Development and Christian Salvation." *Origins*, NC Documentary Service, Vol. 7, No. 20 (November 3, 1977): 306-313.

⁹ Cf. Luke 9:23.

of other things He created are visible in the nature of human beings and made it even nobler with the gifts of reason, freedom, and will.¹⁰ God has favored men with much affection that, in the order of precedence, He created first the rest of things to the advantage of men as stewards of creation.¹¹ The story of the Transfiguration in Luke depicts God guiding the disciples through an invitation and His sacred words, essentially weaving the disciples into the image and likeness of Jesus.

God, being fundamentally immaterial, imparts something profoundly unique to the disciples apart from the event of the Transfiguration. They are granted the extraordinary opportunity to witness, partake, engage, inherit, and undergo a transformation akin to Christ's, a gift unparalleled in any other creation. After God's affirmation and invitation, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." God had set the goal to be achieved, and the way that helps disciples reach the goal is to listen to the Son. The human soul and spirit that come from God is the principle of life that is the fundamental character that is immaterial and rooted to the *imago Dei*. The nature of man is a composite being of body and soul. However, it would not mean that this paradigm concerning human beings is leaning toward a dualist point of view. The human person is not dichotomized in this regard. Instead, it should be understood that men are ensouled bodies or embodied souls.¹²

Humanity's Unique Position and Relationship with God

The gift of the spirit of God is the breath on everyone; He gave them that formed men perfectly peculiar from the rest of creation. Jesus' disciples are endowed with life, consciousness, senses, and most of all, gifted with higher reason and the capacity to exercise volitive faculty that is the free expression of the will.¹³ However, not the man (disciples) who can change everything in him but God who effects change.¹⁴ The novelty of Jesus' disciples' capacity highlights the enormous potential for human beings to think and explore the mysteries of the intellect, comprehend things and wonders, speak languages fluently and with sophistication, and move and work, expressing creativity and beauty.

¹⁰ Melinda Selmys, "Before Sin: Creation, Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden," *This Rock*, May-June 2011, accessed May 17, 2022, <https://www.catholicculture.org/search/resultslist.cfm?requesttype=docbrowseauth&resource=1&catlabel=author&catid=2309>.

¹¹ St. John Paul II, "Christ Appeals to the 'Heart' of Man," General Audience, April 16, 1986, accessed May 17, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1980/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19800416.html.

¹² Peter Kreeft, *Fundamentals of Faith* (San Francisco, California: Ignatius Press, 1988), 55.

¹³ *Made in the Image of God*, (Thebarton, Australia: Catholic Education South Australia, ND), accessed May 17, 2022, <https://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au/our-schools/curriculum/religious-education/made-in-the-image-of-god-mitiog->.

¹⁴ International Theological Commission, "Human Development and Christian Salvation." *Origins*, NC Documentary Service, Vol. 7, No. 20 (November 3, 1977): 306-313.

The creations are bound to give glory to God since it is their ultimate end. In contrast, men are given the foremost gift, the capacity to love God freely and act upon it with moral and spiritual responsibility.¹⁵ The changes in humanity must be preceded by way of acting properly to interior conversion and justice.¹⁶ The ability to love springs from the image of God as a Trinity that is undivided and bounded by love. In the same manner, God predestined humanity to the same calling - to recognize Jesus - to listen - to love.¹⁷ The interior desire within a disciple of Jesus to love fundamentally unveils the vital truth about being a social being, not meant for solitude but for companionship, fostering love through continual interaction with others. As community members, humans share in the life of that community, collectively contributing to an image that reflects their membership in the community of Christ. This reminds Jesus' disciples that the meaning of existence is to build a complete general transformation in the same value.¹⁸ For God's works of salvation beyond men's good or even evil designs.¹⁹

The Catholic tradition would mean that before the fall, men are in perfect possession of human dignity with holy innocence and justice, free from many inconveniences of living.²⁰ The preternatural gifts like infused knowledge, immortality, integrity, and original righteousness²¹ that allowed disciples not to suffer from pain, the reality of death, or disordered affections caused by the distorted will, which is driven by ignorance. The light of infused knowledge disposed men (Jesus' disciples) to always desire the good, shun away the things that pervert the understanding, and allow men to directly grasp the moral law without the dilemma between flesh and spirit.²² So, God's justice through the Holy Spirit and his power grants man (Jesus'

¹⁵ Melinda Selmys, "Before Sin: Creation, Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden," This Rock, May-June 2011, accessed May 17, 2022, <https://www.catholicculture.org/search/resultslist.cfm?requesttype=docbrowseauth&resourcetype=1&catlabel=author&catid=2309>.

¹⁶ International Theological Commission, "Human Development and Christian Salvation." *Origins*, NC Documentary Service, Vol. 7, No. 20 (November 3, 1977): 306-313.

¹⁷ Melinda Selmys, "Before Sin: Creation, Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden," This Rock, May-June 2011, accessed May 17, 2022, <https://www.catholicculture.org/search/resultslist.cfm?requesttype=docbrowseauth&resourcetype=1&catlabel=author&catid=2309>.

¹⁸ Rosemary, Houghton, *The Transformation of Man* (Illinois: Templegate Publishers, 1980).

¹⁹ International Theological Commission, "Human Development and Christian Salvation." *Origins*, NC Documentary Service, Vol. 7, No. 20 (November 3, 1977): 306-313.

²⁰ Albert Kippes, "The Immaculate Conception and the Preternatural Gifts," *Marian Studies*: Article 8, vol. 5, no. 1 (1989): 186-199, accessed May 17, 2022, https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol5/iss1/8.

²¹ Thomas Scannell, "Supernatural Gift," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 6 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), accessed March 8, 2022, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06553a.htm>.

²² Melinda Selmys, "Before Sin: Creation, Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden," This Rock, May-June 2011, accessed May 17, 2022, <https://www.catholicculture.org/search/resultslist.cfm?requesttype=docbrowseauth&resourcetype=1&catlabel=author&catid=2309>.

disciples) to act in freedom, which allows Jesus' disciples to work on building up good and act on good towards perfection through the expression of love.²³ From the Transfiguration, God has given the disciples enormous gifts, including the freedom to choose freely.²⁴ The disciples were not created as programmed and determined robots without volition and freedom. The capacity to will and act freely allowed the disciples to choose and act according to their desires. Whether they believe in Jesus as the Son of God and obey him or not. Jesus is the Son of God.

The Father's direct affirmation, inherited by every individual, has profoundly influenced and shaped all facets of human life. Jesus' primary identity not only existed but also served to untangle the complexities of human will. This enabled human will, within Jesus, to be directed toward perfect and genuine love, fulfilling the mission of Jesus. In embracing Jesus, disciples' desires to love God, the epitome of goodness, are freed from self-centeredness, the pursuit of power, and transient possessions, paving the way for an authentic experience of peace and joy. The fallen nature of humanity has caused immense pain and suffering, not just for the first individuals in history but also persisting through the ages, continuing to disrupt the course of life. This chain of woundedness has inflicted significant harm upon people and the environment, demanding substantial efforts to redeem and restore the lost dignity and relationship that humanity once held, particularly for the followers of Jesus in contemporary times. All societal evils and afflictions stem from the inherited wounds carried by each individual. The magnitude of these wounds is so extensive that it necessitates significant intervention to salvage and rejuvenate the lost dignity and relationships among people, especially those following Jesus in the present era. Human nature or essence is not associated with human characteristics like desire or reason. Nor are human duties or activities such as procreation or dominion, but man's relationships with God are connected to Jesus Christ's divinity.²⁵

The greatest meaning of redemption recognizes God's love for humanity, and humanity with self-surrender belongs to God.²⁶ Following the Transfiguration, Jesus didn't forsake the disciples, leaving them without hope of reconciliation and redemption. He engaged with the disciples, descended the mountain with them, and continued his mission alongside them. It wasn't merely Jesus' desire for his followers to cooperate with him; instead, God's grace allowed humanity to participate in God's mission through obedience. Despite the disciples' weaknesses and troubled state,

²³ International Theological Commission, "Human Development and Christian Salvation." *Origins*, NC Documentary Service, Vol. 7, No. 20 (November 3, 1977): 306-313.

²⁴ CCC, no. 1731 and 1732.

²⁵ Klassen Ryan, "God and Human Dignity." *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2006, 99-103.

²⁶ Richard, Viladesau. *Answering for Faith* (U.S.A: Chicago Press, 1987).

God revealed His compassion by affirming Jesus as His Son. By following the Son, the disciples were allowed to be with Jesus. Jesus didn't abandon his disciples; instead, he graciously journeyed with them, persistently reminding them of his purpose, suffering, death, and resurrection. This continuous companionship and guidance served as a testament to Jesus' commitment to his followers. Darren O. Sumner claimed Christ entered the human condition, living among human conditions to carry out the work of redemption from within; the other that he grabbed hold of humanity from without and hauled humanity out of the mire.²⁷ God was displeased because of human sinfulness, yet out of Adam's descendants, his son Seth Noah came. Noah's fidelity to the author of all creation gave humanity a chance to live.²⁸ After Noah, Abraham was called by God and established a covenant with Him:

Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your Father's house to the land I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'²⁹

God promised Abraham to bless many nations because of him. Abraham begot Isaac, and Isaac begot the twelve patriarchs of Israel. The children of Israel multiplied and grew in multitudes in a foreign land in Egypt, and out of fear, the Egyptians made them slaves and put them in such a wretched condition. God heard their prayers and liberated them. Moses, the great lawgiver and prophet, was instrumental in saving the Jews from slavery and bringing the people of God to the Promised Land. Judges came to handle the children of Israel after the death of Moses. Eventually, God gave them a king, the Soul son of Kish, and after four decades of rule, God appointed a new king whom He considered a man next to His heart and who would fulfill his wish. From the descendants of David, the primrose savior, Christ is born – Jesus.³⁰

When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.³¹

²⁷ Darren, O. Sumner. "Fallenness and Anhypostasis: A Way Forward in the Debate over Christ's Humanity." *Scottish Journal of Theology*, (2014), 195–212.

²⁸ G. Cohen, Arthur Hertzberg, Shlomo Pines, Moshe Greenberg, Georges Vajda, Haim Z. Dimitrovsky, Louis H. Feldman, Theodor H. Gaster, David Novak, Salo W. Baron, and Lou H. Silberman, "Judaism," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Judaism>.

²⁹ Cf. Genesis 12:1-3.

³⁰ Cf. Acts 13:23.

³¹ Cf. Galatians 4:4-5.

Faith and Salvation

Jesus epitomizes the fulfillment of God's promise to deliver humanity from the grip of original sin. His ultimate sacrifice stands as the highest form of redemption for humanity. Throughout the New Testament, faith is consistently intertwined with belief in Christ and his revered identity as the Messiah, the Son of God. This belief is the cornerstone of faith for all who follow Christ and underscores the redemptive work aligned with God's active will. The entire New Testament scriptures emphasize the pivotal importance of believers' faith in Christ. It is faith in God that brings salvation, and we believe that Christ is the Son of God,³² who died and rose again for mankind.³³ For this reason, faith in salvation is an eternal union in the body of Christ, who was born, died, rose again, and is at the right hand of God.³⁴ In the light of the New Testament, society cannot truly change until people come to harmony with God and each other only when man becomes a new creation through conversion, transformation, and justice that will shape all situations of human living in true freedom.³⁵

God, in His ultimate love, without a second thought, incarnated in human form and served His people and willfully offered Himself unselfishly, even to the point of death. Humanity can only gain true freedom and escape the captivity of the power of evil through the grace and strength of God in the human mind and heart. It is this that changes when all the conditions of sin by which man lives in faith build a more just world.³⁶ The death of a perfect human and perfect God reconciled men and God once again. The death of Jesus brought salvation to the world because it was the death of no ordinary man but also a God. St. Irenaeus said, "The glory of God is to be found in the life of man." Thus, in God, Jesus united all things in humanity to himself so that man had a voice of freedom in praise of God in Jesus, "they raise their voice in free praise of the Creator" (GS: 14a).³⁷ The sacrifice of Jesus was made perfect through his resurrection, the promise of a new life, and eternal communion with God through Jesus. The power of the cross and the transmission of that truth also reveals who God is. The God of the cross is the one who gave life to the world through the death of the Son. The self-sacrifice and self-giving in Jesus transform weakness into

³² Cf. (1 Jn 4:15; 5: 5-10).

³³ Cf. (Rm 3:22-25; 10:9; Col 2:12).

³⁴ Cipriano Vagaggini, O.S.B. *The Flesh Instrument of Salvation*. Rome, Italy: Alba House, 1968.

³⁵ International Theological Commission, "Human Development and Christian Salvation." *Origins*, NC Documentary Service, Vol. 7, No. 20 (November 3, 1977): 306-313.

³⁶ *Ibid.*,

³⁷ *Gaudium et Spes*: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. - Kloppenburg, Bonaventure. *Christian Salvation and Human Temporal Progress* (Chicago, Illinois: Franciscan Herald Press, 1979).

strength, suffering into redemption, and foolishness into wisdom.³⁸ He who brought salvation in Christ. The movement of freedom in humanity is the basis of new life in Jesus Christ, for the true meaning of freedom can only be explained by the word “in Christ.”³⁹

Discipleships’ Dignity and Dependence on Grace

The Humanity’s Fall and Susceptibility to Evil

During the Transfiguration, the disciples beheld the Glory of Jesus Christ, and his divine identity was unveiled to them. This profound experience illustrates the convergence between humanity’s dignity and dependence on grace. Humanity is formed in the likeness and image of the Divine, and from the same principle, man receives the worth and value that he has and continues to claim. Out of the temptation and the desire for apparent goodness of having the faculty of discerning what is good from evil and to be like gods, Adam and Eve fall to sin. Men’s hearts will be weakened due to sin, and they become susceptible to choosing temporal goods and fail to see the transcendent. Personal desires and other inordinate passions overshadowed the heart drawn to God’s ultimate goodness and beauty, like what the Jesus’ disciples had witnessed about his glory.⁴⁰ The fallen nature of man made him absolutely incapable of refusing evil for good. The inclination to run after the desires of the flesh became so strong that it caused much interior struggle for men to choose the good, perfect, and true. The same circumstances of men paved the way for many evils and sufferings in the world. The egoistic and selfish tendency of humanity to gain pleasure and power has caused much suffering to himself and his fellow. Similar to Peter, after witnessing the Glory of Jesus, he expressed his wish to stay on the mountain instead of going down to continue his journey.

Philosophical Perspectives on Human Nature

As the disciples witnessed the brilliant transfiguration of their Master, they were encountered with the fullness of divine glory, recognizing the transcending nature of their calling. Thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Niccolo Machiavelli would share common ideas of human nature as selfish and

³⁸ Alexandra R. Brown, *The Cross and Human Transformation* (U.S.A: Fortress Press, 1995).

³⁹ Beatrice Bruteau, *The Grand Option - Personal Transformation and a New Creation* (U.S.A: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

⁴⁰ Stéphane Harent, “Original Sin,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 11 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), accessed May 14, 2022, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11312a.htm>.

evil.⁴¹ They have seen the consequences of the original sin. However, their opinion about human nature is opaque as they failed to see that the evil tendencies within human beings would not eradicate nor eventually negate the goodness and dignity of humanity. For in Jesus' disciple's dignity, the Christian message reveals the essence of the language of the mind and heart as proof that every action for life is a partnership and dignity of the person and the community.⁴² Jesus' disciples in today's context, who are in Christ, are being transformed, reshaped in self, conformed to Jesus Christ's crucified image, and it is noted that all these are the work of the Holy Spirit from the inner self; that is, transformation by God's grace to find out the real self in Jesus' identity, the Son of God.⁴³

Moreover, they actively participated in the mission by believing and heeding the words of the Son as the direct speech of the Father stated to the disciples were presented to listen to Jesus. It is expressed through the eschatological harvest by bearing fruit and witnessing Jesus' sonship so that today's disciples of Jesus can better understand what it means to be faithful followers of Christ. The feebleness of human nature does not mean that humanity lost its dignity and worth due to its sinfulness and inordinate passions. The dignity of man does not originate from Him. Thomas A. Shannon and Lisa Sowle Cahill argue that the concept of human dignity is defined in biblical and religious terms, then understand that Man is God's creation, in the image of God, created according to God's will and following His commands. However, from the perspective of faith, it is not considered that human dignity requires more moral obligations for Christians that should not be self-evident to other right-thinking people.⁴⁴ From the beginning, God created man in his image and likeness, and the fall of humanity caused a huge chasm between men and God, but God did not hide away from His creation - deism. Instead, God patiently extends his hands to make different covenants with men. The covenant of God with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David were all manifestations of God's unfathomable mercy for humanity. All the covenants that God established with humanity find their fulfillment in the incarnation and the paschal mystery of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was foretold that Jesus himself would complete his exodus in Jerusalem in the Transfiguration event. The final sacrifice of Jesus in the Calvary and his resurrection that redeemed and gave

⁴¹ Thomas Hobbes, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Niccolo Machiavelli were all modern thinkers, and they commonly share the same notion of human nature, and their idea of man is negative. They would not agree with the classical notions of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle that man is good by nature. Hobbes would even consider the man a wolf to another man since the man himself is a constant threat to his fellow human beings.

⁴² Dafne S. Plou, *Global Communication - Is There a Place for Human Dignity?* (Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1996).

⁴³ Donald J. Luther, "The Mystery of the Transfiguration: Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)" (2001), 100.

⁴⁴ Thomas A. Shannon, and Lisa S. Cahill, *Religion and Artificial Reproduction* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1988).

hope to all humanity restored the broken relationship of men to God be its' fulfilled promise. The image of God within every person is now restored because of the ultimate sacrifice of the innocent Messiah.

The Transformative Power of Grace in Human Dignity

The event of the Transfiguration serves as a poignant reminder that human dignity, though marred by sin, is redeemed and restored through encounters with the divine. The disciples' journey from doubt to conviction reflects humanity's capacity to transcend its fallen nature through the transformative power of God's grace. Just as the disciples were elevated to witness the glory of Christ, so too are today's believers called to ascend from the depths of sin to the heights of divine connection, relying entirely on the grace of God for strength and guidance. The broken image and dignity of men are made again perfect not of personal human effort but precisely because of the very act of God through His passion, death, and resurrection. Human dignity is not due to himself as the concupiscence weakens him, but rather, it is all because of the goodness of the Lord that he offered Himself for the sake of humanity. The grace that springs from the goodness of God is the sole reason for human dignity.⁴⁵ By that, the human person's dignity becomes part of the content of the proclamation of the Good News.⁴⁶ God's gift encompasses healing, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. However, it isn't bestowed without any responsibility or commitment on humanity's part. In God's boundless generosity, disciples are expected to embrace the Gospel with open hearts and live accordingly. True conversion occurs when individuals respond to God's call to climb the mountain as conveyed through the Church, dedicating themselves to living based on the principles of love and compassion. The ability to transition from old ways and lifestyles wouldn't be achievable without the transformative grace of God, manifest through the incarnation and resurrection of His Son. Humanity, in its capacity, cannot combat the forces of evil and the world's entanglements. Individuals find the strength and capacity to navigate these challenges through God's grace. However, Jesus Christ came and freed humanity, renewing his bond with God by freeing people from the world's power.⁴⁷ Jesus' disciple's dignity requires acting in knowledge and free choice with full capacity to passion, to pursue the goal in choice spontaneously of all the good, and to procure for humanity by effective and skillful action.⁴⁸ Grace from the Lord and willful human cooperation to direct

⁴⁵ Walter Drum, "The Incarnation," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), accessed May 14, 2022, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07706b.htm>.

⁴⁶ Office For Human Development. *Human: Work, World, Development* (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 1990).

⁴⁷ Cf. Jn 12:31.

⁴⁸ GS., 17.

one's self to the call to holiness and service is the foremost key to moving gradually from the past to the new way of living in the light of the Lord.⁴⁹ Jesus summoned his disciples to be reapers, sent to gather what they did not sow, yet to derive value from being commissioned by Christ's command. During the Transfiguration, the disciples beheld the Glory of Jesus Christ, and his divine identity was unveiled to them. Moreover, they actively participated in the mission by believing and heeding the words of the Son. It is expressed through the eschatological harvest by bearing fruit and witnessing Jesus' sonship so that today's disciples of Jesus can better understand what it means to be faithful followers of Christ.⁵⁰

The Implications of the Lukan Study vis-à-vis Discipleship in Today's World Context

Dorothy Lee stated that faith is an essential factor to see and hear in the event of the Transfiguration.⁵¹ Faith allowed Jesus' disciples to be presented at the event as witnesses, perceiving with both the physical and faith senses. Faith itself is a divine gift. In the Transfiguration, Jesus' disciples showed that gift of faith by what they saw and heard that all given from above so that, along with the revelation of the Father about Jesus' true identity, they came to believe Jesus is the Son of God, to perceive his words. Jesus shared an intimate relationship with the Father, embodying the same will, purpose, attitude, and character, thus making Christ the visible representation of the invisible God. This unity and completeness in Christ were expected from his disciples and all who believed in him. Jesus' proclamation regarding humanity as the genuine light illuminating every individual isn't a temporary function; he continues to enlighten people in diverse ways through his eternal words. God the Father has expressly called us to "Listen to him." Jesus voluntarily shouldered human suffering and encouraged all his followers to bear their trials. In a profound act of love for humanity, the cross of Jesus revealed the nature of God through the suffering that arises from love, a demonstration through which God expressed profound care for humanity. Humans see how great his love for humanity is. How sinful, God still saves humanity through Jesus, who gave his life as a ransom for humanity.⁵²

The Transfiguration is a model for Jesus' disciples in contemporary life, depicting an ascent to the mount of glory through the endurance of daily suffering

⁴⁹ Walter Drum, "The Incarnation," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, ed. Robert Appleton (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), accessed May 14, 2022, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07706b.htm>.

⁵⁰ Andreas J. Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus & The Disciples: according to the Fourth Gospel* (U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 176-178.

⁵¹ Dorothy A. Lee, "On the Holy Mountain: The Transfiguration in Scripture and Theology," *Colloquium* 36, no. 2 (2004): 156.

⁵² Cf. Rm 5:8; Philippians 2:6-11.

and hardships. This event signifies a gradual triumph over the crises that challenge human faith in the Oneness of God. To be disciples of Jesus in the present context, individuals must transform akin to the Master's self-transcendence. As humanity endures suffering, they can eventually attain the glory revealed in Christ's divine radiance. The glory witnessed in the Transfiguration represents the manifestation of Jesus' divine preexistence and the fulfillment of his glory. In Luke's account of the Transfiguration, the term "Glory" aims to provide an appropriate response that underscores the significance of Jesus' prayer. The glory displayed in this event serves to manifest and unveil Jesus' true identity.

Jesus' disciples in today's context find himself only when he is seen with love. Here, this image shows God's presence, for transcendence, for the presence of God's gaze in the eyes of others. Therefore, human's concrete relationships with fellow human beings are expressed in love, and sharing is how the image of God appears in humanity.⁵³ The image of God is visible in the relationship between Jesus and the Father. Today, Jesus' disciples must share his passion and death as they hope for the inheritance of Jesus' glorious resurrection.

Additionally, the world is confronting a multitude of challenges, including issues such as climate change, natural disasters, violence, the rapid advancement of information technology, digital transformation, human rights concerns, global conflicts and efforts towards peace, sustainable energy, healthcare disparities, economic downturns, escalating inflation, mental health crises, aging populations, poverty, disease, resource scarcity, and more.

Facing these situations, the disciples of Jesus in this day and age need to collaborate in finding solutions to change the negative present towards transformation for the better through the change in themselves as Jesus' disciples in today's world. The Transfiguration event points immense significance in the life of Jesus and carries profound implications for discipleship in today's world. This event strongly affirms the divinity of Jesus by revealing him in his full glory as the Son of God. It reinforces the central Christian belief that Jesus isn't merely a human teacher or prophet but the Son of God. As disciples of Jesus in the present day, humanity must acknowledge and embrace this truth about Jesus, making him the center of their lives. The Transfiguration also emphasizes the significance of prayer and spiritual disciplines. This transformative event occurred as Jesus engaged in prayer, revealing a transformation in his appearance in the presence of God. As disciples of Jesus today, humanity needs to prioritize a life of prayer and spiritual practices to foster a deeper relationship with God and be transformed by His presence. Moreover, the

⁵³ Jose Granados, "Embodied Light, Incarnate Image: The Mystery of Jesus Transfigured." *Communio*, (2008), 31.

Transfiguration underscores the importance of listening to God. The voice from heaven during the event explicitly said, “This is my chosen Son, listen to him!” (Luke 9:35). In contemporary times, as disciples of Jesus, humanity needs to be attentive to God’s voice and follow His guidance in their daily lives. Delving deeply into the Father’s call to “listen to him” enables individuals to navigate life’s challenges, enveloped in the gentle radiance and peace reflected in the Transfiguration of Jesus.

Ana Langerak claimed the Transfiguration is God’s yes to the disciples. The ‘yes’ to the disciples’ imperfect faith and perfectible discipleship. The ‘yes’ to the disciples’ vocation as Jesus’ listeners. The ‘yes’ to disciples’ obedience. The ‘yes’ to weight down power.⁵⁴ Hence, the Transfiguration is an invitation to experience becoming the light from Jesus with Jesus. It requires Jesus’ disciples to be burned by the light of the passion to transform the world.⁵⁵ The Transfiguration serves as a vital preparation for the challenges inherent in discipleship. Occurring just before Jesus’ exodus, passion, suffering, and eventual death fortified his disciples’ faith for the trials ahead. Similarly, in today’s context, individuals following Jesus will encounter their share of difficulties and hardships. However, drawing strength from the assurance that Jesus is with humanity and that his ultimate glory will be revealed can provide solace and courage during trying times.

The Transfiguration invites all humanity to partake in Jesus’ glory. Revealing Jesus in his glorified state, this event points towards the promise of eternal life and the shared glory inherent in him for all humankind. As disciples of Jesus today, individuals are beckoned to share in this glory by living lives of faithfulness and obedience to God. In today’s world, the Transfiguration event holds crucial implications for discipleship. It affirms the divinity of Jesus, underscores the significance of prayer and spiritual disciplines, calls upon humanity to listen to God, prepares individuals for the challenges of discipleship, and extends an invitation to all to partake in the shared glory promised through Jesus.

Conclusion

The gift of conversion is given to men, who are individuals endowed with the freedom to respond fully to such a call. God initiates transformation within a conversion process, and humans only need to give their ultimate yes and commitment to perfectly attain the same grace. From the very beginning, God created man good as he is made in the image and likeness of God. God is rational and free, and this foremost characteristic is shared between men and God. However, human freedom

⁵⁴ Ana Langerak, “Study of the Word: Luke 9:28-36 - Power in Mission.” *Mission Studies* (1993), 211.

⁵⁵ Benedict XVI. *Jesus of Nazareth (Part I)* (Vatican: Libreria Editric Vaticana, 2007), 315.

and reason are finite compared to the perfection of God's freedom and omnipotence. The devil seduced humanity and caused men's fall to sin and evil. Sin separated men from God, but the love of the Divine cannot be overturned even by sin itself. God, in His goodness, took human form and saved humanity. Conversion transforms our basic trust, human loyalty, and faithfulness to the cause taught and embodied by the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁶ By the supreme sacrifice of the Son, men were saved. He restored the brokenness of men and the dignity everyone deserves. The worth and value of humanity or the person's dignity is due to every person, not because human beings deserve it but because of God's grace.

At the transfiguration event, Luke presented that the content of the story of Jesus and Moses and Elijah is about Jesus' journey to suffer, die, and complete in Jerusalem. Thereby, Luke emphasizes that the element of suffering is the fate of Jesus and his disciples. The Transfiguration, therefore, reveals the glorious form of Christ, the divine Son. The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ is a timeless beacon, illuminating the path of discipleship for past, present, and future generations. In exploring its implications for discipleship in today's world context, humanity has unearthed profound truths that resonate deeply with the human soul. The man began their journey by unraveling the concept of disciple transformation, recognizing that following Jesus requires more than mere association; it demands an inner transformation that leads humans from their old selves to a new life in Christ. Patience, trust, and the transformative power of prayer emerged as guiding lights on this path of discipleship.

Moreover, humanity explored the dignity of discipleship and its profound dependence on divine grace. In a world marred by sin and temptation, restoring human dignity does not stem from human efforts but flows from the inexhaustible wellspring of God's grace. Humanity discovered that grace and human cooperation are intertwined in conversion, transformation, and the pursuit of justice.

In today's world, marked by myriad challenges and uncertainties, the Transfiguration offers inspiration and strength for the disciples of Jesus Christ. Man has learned that faith, prayer, and attentive listening to God's voice are vital components of our discipleship journey. The Transfiguration reminds all that humans are not alone in our struggles; Jesus, who revealed His divinity on that mountaintop, is with man, guiding man through the trials and tribulations of life. Ultimately, the Transfiguration invites all humanity to share in Jesus' glory and eternal life. It serves as a powerful affirmation of His divinity and the promise that, as His disciples, humans,

⁵⁶ Glen H. Stassen, "Concrete Christological Norms for Transformation." In Richard, H. Niebuhr, *Authentic Transformation* (U.S.A: Abingdon Press, 1996). 127–190. Cf. "Martin Luther and the Renewal of Human Confidence" 1959.

too, can partake in the radiance of His presence. This divine promise sustains all navigating the complexities of the modern human world.

The Transfiguration's implications for discipleship are left with a profound sense of purpose and hope. The call to follow Jesus is not a relic of the past but a living and relevant invitation that echoes through the ages. It is a call to transformation, recognizing human intrinsic dignity through God's grace and unwavering faith in life's challenges. Ultimately, the Transfiguration unveils the enduring truth that discipleship is not a solitary journey but a path walked hand in hand with the One who was transfigured on that sacred mountain. It is a journey that marked by faith, prayer, and the deepening connection with the divine. It is a journey that ultimately leads us to share in the eternal glory of Jesus Christ, our guiding light and source of everlasting hope.^{PS}

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