

## Transformations

*LET this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Transformation is a fact of life for all of us. We start out as infants, in a small, intimate world which is limited to the comfort of a few, familiar faces. And then comes childhood, and if it hasn't been troubled, it is like a long and timeless walk through a world of wonder and whys, of big adults and huge proportions which seem to shrink the taller we grow and the older we get. And then without warning we are deposited on the unsteady ground of adolescence, and if we've come through that alive, we are quickly pushed center stage into adulthood, without even feeling that we're at all prepared. Then comes a long stretch called the twenties and thirties, when we desperately strive to learn how to maneuver this thing called life. But time never stands still, and it's on to that certain mellowing of the forties and fifties, after which the first hint of the new uncertainties of advancing age makes itself known. Soon we learn what it means to grow old, and what it actually feels like to be among that august body whose inevitable membership we were always able to put off. Transformations. Changes.

The differences between one stage of growth and the next sometimes bring alterations of such magnitude, that those around us exclaim, "My, I hardly knew who you were. You hardly look like the same person." We either delight in such comments, or hate them, depending upon where we're at in life.

As we look at today's Epistle, we will see that the story of our Lord's Incarnation is also one of transformations. Let's follow Him as He moves through them. But let's also remind ourselves constantly that although our changes are inevitable, His were entirely voluntarily, with a very specific purpose in mind.

His journey began *in the form of God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God" (Nicene Creed). Let's impress this upon our minds as the very foundation of the Lord's identity—that which He always was, and always will be. But He *made himself of no reputation. Of no reputation.* How can the One whose fingerprint can be seen upon every detail of Creation make Himself of no reputation within it?

But the tale of transformation continues. *He took upon him the form of a servant.* He who was in God's form has become a servant of no reputation. He who knows all becomes He who is

is known by none. He who through His sovereignty is Himself served by every conceivable purpose under heaven is now a servant. *And he was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man.* Men, for whom originally God had formed the entirety of this world. Men, who created in His image, chose to sin, with all heaven and earth as their witness, bringing everything down along with themselves to misery and death. Men, utterly helpless to redeem themselves from the consequences, but ever too proud to admit it. Yes, it is them; it is us; in whose likeness He arrived.

*He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* He was in the form of God. He surrendered His reputation and became a servant. He became man. Now He became a condemned criminal. But not merely a petty thief. No, the indictment against Him exceeds even murder and treason. He is a blasphemer, and has dared to claim to be the One whose very name we tremble in fear to even utter. Guilty of such an enormous sin, he deserves the guilt of all sins. What form of execution, cry the wicked crowds, would be sufficient to such a crime?

Transformations... There He hangs, upon the cross: *his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men* (Is. 52:14). He became utterly unrecognizable, that we might regain our recognition as those made in God's image, whose identity had been lost through sin. *He said, it is finished, and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost* (Jn. 19:30).

But having reached the very bottom, below which there remains nothing, He commences the ascent, and, and takes upon Himself once more the very things which He had laid aside. *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.* Forth from the tomb He strides, but even His friends for fear and wonder cannot recognize Him, except for Mary Martha's sister: *She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni* (Jn. 20:16b). For the victory of his mighty resurrection has yielded a wondrous transformation, and that, in turn, will give way to His glorious ascension.

From the form of God, to that of a servant of no reputation, to a man, to a crucified criminal. And then to a victor over death, the world, and the devil, and finally, to the place of highest honor, for God has *given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.*

Although He has returned from whence He came, and to whom He had once been, He Himself has been eternally transformed. For He yet bears the scars that testify to the cost of His decision to commence that road of changes that he chose to walk.

And all of this so that *we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [can be] changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord* (2 Cor. 3:18). Transformations! Changes! Glory be to God.

*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*