

*Transfiguration*, by Fra Angelico

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While a Dominican monk at San Marco's monastery in Florence, Fra Angelico (1395–1455) was commissioned to paint frescoes in the meeting rooms and dormitory cells of the lay brothers, novices, and clergy. With the help of assistants, he painted more than 40 frescoes at San Marco, most of them depicting scenes of Christ's crucifixion. The *Transfiguration* was painted in Cell 6, which belonged to one

of the clerics. Christ stands on a rock with outstretched arms, foreshadowing his crucifixion. Fra Angelico has further connected Christ's transfiguration ecstasy with his passion by depicting Christ's face, nimbus (halo), and radiant white garments in a remarkably similar way to the *Mocking* scene in the adjacent Cell 7 (which housed another cleric). The three apostles who accompanied Christ to the mountain cower in awe. On either side of Christ stand the Virgin Mary and St. Dominic, in postures of devotion. The heads of Moses and Elijah (who also appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Christ in Matthew 17) are under Christ's arms. The sparse fresco, devoid of all but the essential details of the scene, is intended to inspire its viewer to prayer and meditation on the agony and ecstasy of the suffering and glorified Christ.