



# The Transfiguration

*Through Different Lenses*



The transfiguration of Jesus occurred when Jesus took three of His disciples up a mountain to pray, and then, something happened, Moses and Elijah show up, a voice is heard in the clouds, and Jesus was transformed. The transfiguration of Jesus is recorded in **Matthew 17:1–8**, **Mark 9:2–8**, and **Luke 9:28–36**. It is also alluded to in **2 Peter 1:16–21**. In these scriptures we see this man, Jesus son of Joseph, that has been doing amazing things, blessing and feeding, giving and healing, somehow transformed into something more. We get a glimpse of Jesus’s full heavenly glory and a taste of His divine brightness. We hear who Jesus really is as God says, “This is my beloved Son.” We see the glow of Christ.

Transfiguration is about astonishment. It is about amazement. It is about awe. It is about something that is hard to define, something that is hard to wrap our heads around.

So, how do we capture this sense of amazing love and transforming grace? How do we express the astonishment we have for such a wonderful Creator and Redeemer? Art is one way humanity tries to capture the sense of awe. So, let’s take a look at how some people from varying cultures and times have tried to capture this feeling, this presence, this wonder that is the transfiguration of Jesus.

## To Be Transformed

### μεταμορφώω

Even though many amazing artists have tried, maybe, we aren’t supposed to be able to capture the awe. Maybe, the authors of the gospels weren’t supposed to be able to record just how amazing it was. Maybe, we aren’t supposed to fully understand the mystery that is our God? Which means we can’t fully grasp this moment which Jesus steps into His divinity.



Stained glass, location & artist unknown

This makes me think of a quote from Barry Taylor, AC/DC’s Road Manager, “**God is the name of the blanket we put over the mystery to give it shape.**” We can’t fully understand God, so we can’t fully understand this transformation that Jesus underwent called the transfiguration.

But, we can experience a form of it ourselves because we can be transformed in Christ. You see the only times the Greek word for transfiguration (metamorphoomai) is used in the Bible is in reference to the transfiguration of Christ (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2) and in the change that we go through in fellowship with Christ (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

So, take a moment to look at the various works of art in this publication. Consider the time and place they were made. Consider the cultures, influences, and lives of those who made them. Maybe, even look up the artists to learn more. Consider how Peter, James, and John are depicted? Moses and Elijah? Jesus?



Stained glass, location & artist unknown

I’m sure you will like some of these pieces of art and maybe not others. And that is OK, but remember, there is no right or wrong depiction of the transfiguration. Only expressions of how people sense the awe, the wonder, the glory of God.

There are things that make you different than these artists, these people, but so much more that makes you the same. I hope exploring this publication helped you grow closer to God and neighbor.

Pastor Brandon

## ARTWORK

### Front Top:

Right:

Raphael

Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City, Rome, Italy

1516-1520

Left:

Study for “Transfiguration”

Raphael

1516

### Front left to right:

Sadao Watanabe

Japan, 1971

Mayis Mkhitarian

Armenia, 2013

St. Peter’s Cathedral, Vatican City, Rome, Italy

Author & date unknown

A.D. Thomas (1907-1989)

India

Cornelis Monsma

New Zealand, 2006

### Back left to right:

Lewis Bowman

United States, 2008

JESUS MAFA

Cameroon, 1973

Artist unknown

Ethiopia, early 1800s

Napoleon V. Abueva

Philippines, 1979



## FEATURED WORK

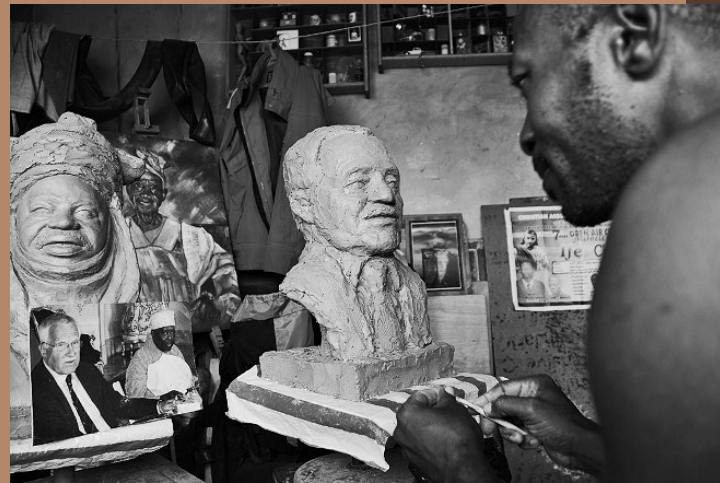
# “THE TRANSFIGURATION”

## BY AUGUSTIN KOLAWOLE OLAYINKA

### NIGERIA

#### THE ARTIST

**Augustin Kolawole Olayinka** was born in Ibadan/Nigeria in 1964 and discovered his artistic abilities as a child. Through the mediation of an uncle he was able to take an apprenticeship with the artist Bayo Ogundele in Ile-Ife. Like his famous brother Rufus Ogundele, Bayo belonged to the Oshogbo School, which was founded in the mid-1960s by Georgina and Ulli Beier (she was a painter from England and he a linguist from Germany). Typical for the Oshogbo style are flat compositions, use of primary colors, representation of faces like African masks and themes from Yoruba culture (like mythology, dance and agriculture). In 1986 Olayinka passed the entrance examination of the university in Ile-Ife and was able to study art for four years. When he won the missio Art Prize in 1993, he was invited to Aachen, Germany for three months and gained international recognition. But it remained difficult to make a living from art. At times he earned money as a motorcycle taxi driver. Between 2008 and 2012 he received several commissions to decorate Catholic churches in Nigeria. Even though his wife, Funke, has a small tailor shop and trades in food, the money was not



enough to finance a higher education of their two sons and three daughters. At times the family could only afford one meal a day. Together with his family, Olayinka belongs to a Pentecostal church founded in 2006, where he is also active as a choir conductor and Sunday school teacher. He continues to make a living from artistic commissions, which include an enormous range of styles and techniques (painting, fabric printing, clay reliefs, cement statues).

#### Jesus Leads us to the End of History

The perspective of this image is striking in comparison to most of the representations of the Transfiguration of Jesus: the foreground does not show the disciples kneeling or lying but Jesus coming towards the viewer, followed by Moses and Elijah. Three disciples stand in the background further down on the mountain. They see the apparition only from behind, looking at the back of the divine reality (cf. Ex 33:23). Two of them hold one of their hands in front of their eyes to protect themselves from the blinding light.



Moses and Elijah do not stand next to Jesus, they are not in conversation with him, but walk behind him as his followers. Moses carries the stick he performed miracles with (Ex 4:2) and the belt of the Passover (Ex 12:11). Elijah carries a simple prophet's robe of camel hair (2 Kings 1:8), while the flames at the bottom of his robe may refer to God's miraculous fire on Mount Carmel.

The color scheme is striking: warm earth colors of brown and ochre predominate. The green and red of the sky are reflected in the garment of Jesus. His halo and the upper part of his robe are pink. And does the green patch at the bottom of his robe perhaps refer to the devil, who Christ will be facing soon in the evil of the cross?

In the artist's perspective the story of the Transfiguration not only tells about Jesus showing himself to the disciples. Jesus comes towards us, he invites us to follow him and join his followers of different ages – until the end of history.