

## Transfigurations

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*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page, which includes Vest's current Living by the Word column as well as past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

Jesus' transfiguration is a mystery that defies a straightforward explanation. I find that instead of clarifying anything about his unique nature, it only adds more confusion.

Was Jesus' earthly appearance a facade that was stripped away for his closest disciples to see? Or was his transfigured appearance a facade overlaid on his earthly form to boost his credibility? Is Jesus of earth or of heaven? Or, does the fact that Jesus was somehow in flux say something profound about humanity and our reflection of God's image?

What does it mean to be in flux? What does it mean to be in transition? What does it mean to be in the process of becoming?

One of the most thought-provoking examples of biblical interpretation I have witnessed in the past year is Peterson Toscano's fascinating one-person play [Transfigurations: Transgressing Gender in the Bible](#). It is an engrossing midrash on stories of gender nonconformity in the Bible. If you ever get a chance to see it, I highly recommend it.

Toscano generates much-needed dialog about transgender issues in the church. My sense is that while most progressive Christians are fully on board with LGBTQ inclusion and equality, many are still mystified by the "T." For me, the most perplexing theological question is the notion of intentionally altering the bodies we are born with, which we believe are created in God's image. If we believe that God also creates some people with gender identities different from their physical bodies,

how do we reconcile all of this in a theologically coherent way?

I posed this question to a transgender leader in my denomination. He told me that that his theology is grounded in the notion of being called and in the process of becoming. This makes a lot of sense to me; it reminds me that we are all involved in these dynamics of change. All of us are called to change our hearts and lives as we trust the good news and live into God's kingdom.

I wonder if something like this is revealed in the mystery of Jesus' transfiguration.

I hope that the church will continue to have ever deeper conversations about transgender realities. We'll be addressing these issues frankly and openly at the [Progressive Youth Ministry Conference](#) I'll be hosting in Chicago in March. We're grateful that the *Christian Century* has sponsored this event. If you are able to be in the Chicago area, please join us!