

IT IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS



I meet new people daily. I continually meet people who are not as they initially appear. Prejudging others once happened too frequently; today, I consciously temper my initial impressions. (First impressions matter; second impressions are honest.)

I hear a story line; where I once formed a quick conclusion, I now try to learn more.

I was in a jury pool the summer before last. After hearing an overview of the events that resulted in this lawsuit, I concluded that the plaintiff had an unhealthy expectation of entitlement, with no honest reason to sue. Upon being selected as a juror, I spent the next four days learning the facts of the case, understanding the attitudes of the actors in this incident, assembling the jigsaw pieces of the events that led up to this final scene, and discussing the details with my fellow jurors.

My conclusion was 180° from my snap judgment.

The Gospel accounts of Jesus contain scant evidence that the apostles' first impressions were that Jesus was the Son of God. Or their second impressions. But after, "Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white," Peter, James and John – the chosen ones – likely understood Jesus' 180° differently than before.

Not long before the transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, Jesus asked his disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Messiah" (Mark 8:29).

Before that moment, before being tested, the disciples were slowly coming to understand the true nature of Jesus – human and divine. Even Peter's answer that Jesus was the Messiah did not indicate that he yet realized that Jesus was the Son of God.

Jesus' transfiguration was like finding that one piece of the jigsaw puzzle that connects smaller sections into a coherent image. The puzzle, however, was still unfinished.

In our first reading, God tested Abraham's devotion and requested that he offer Isaac as a holocaust. At the last second, the Lord's messenger stopped Abraham and complimented him on his devotion to God. What seemed like a cruel sacrifice to a demanding God was not what it seemed. It was a test, only a test. Abraham was a chosen one.

St. Paul gives us hope that when we are devoted to God, then we too are God's chosen ones. We are not required to undergo a test as severe as Abraham's. We are not required to witness a miracle such as the transfiguration. We are required to be devoted to God by faith alone.

As people of this world, we benefit by seeking to understand, gathering the facts, and learning the stories behind the story.

As people of God, it is our complete and utter faith that allows us to "see" the bigger picture.

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