

OWITF Reflections



"I am caterpillar. The leaves I eat taste bitter. But dimly I sense a great change coming. What I offer you humans is my willingness to dissolve and transform. I do that without knowing what the end result will be". (from Thinking Like a Mountain, Towards a Council of All Beings).

Dear Brothers and Friends,

At this moment in our history as a Congregation, we are being invited and impelled to evolve into something new. Both individually and collectively we are pressurized from within to embark on a journey of transition. In an older theology we might say that 'God is calling us' or that 'the Spirit is moving us'. But where is this God? Where is this Spirit? Nowhere else except right here among us and within us. This is what we mean when we speak of 'Incarnation'. We recall Teilhard de Chardin who, while celebrating "The Mass over the World" prayed, "I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labours and suffering of the world." The power of God at work in Christ is transforming the Earth from within.

Sue Monk Kidd puts it this way in her book *When the Heart Waits*, "Am I being compelled to disturb my inner universe in quest of the undiscovered being who clamours from within?" She goes on to tell the following story:

"There's a story about a young man who sought out a wise old man and asked, 'What great blunder have you made?' The old man replied, 'They called me a Christian but I did not become Christ'. The seeker was perplexed. 'You did not become Christ? Is one supposed to become Christ?'"

The old man answered, 'I kept putting distance between myself and him—by seeking, by praying, by reading. I kept deploring the distance, but I never realized that I was creating it.' 'But', the seeker insisted, 'is one supposed to become Christ?'"

His answer: 'No distance.' When there's no distance between us and our inner Christ, we're most human, most ourselves."

Perhaps this is the transition that is stirring within us both individually and as Congregation - 'becoming Christ'. I am reminded of a line from the French novelist Anatole France: "All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind is part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter into another".

At this moment of transition, you are being drawn into Mystery for transformation. As you stand at the threshold of outward change, life is calling you, commissioning you to move into a new stage of becoming. Transition is that inner journey that one undertakes to come to terms with outward change. Something has to die before something new and beautiful can be born.

"The beginning will take place only after they will have come through the wilderness and are ready to make the emotional commitment to do the things the new way and see themselves as new people. Starts involve new situations. Beginnings involve new understandings, new values, new attitudes and most of all new identities. Starts are to be carefully designed. Beginnings can and should be nourished like a plant." (from Managing Transitions by William Bridges).

Let us go back to the image of the metamorphosis of the caterpillar. It is a well-known fact that all caterpillars do not yield themselves to the cocoon at the same rate. When the moment to spin the chrysalis arrives, some of them actually resist and cling to their larval life. They put off entering the cocoon until the following spring, postponing their transformation for a year or more. This state of clinging has a name; it's called the 'diapause'. So humans are not the only creatures who have trouble letting go. At the moment of greatest possibility, a desperate clinging energy rises up in us in a valiant attempt to save our old life. So we wish for the maintenance of the present rather than engage with a larger vision that is pressing for life.

Am I in a spiritual diapause?

What is beneath all my clinging?

What are we clinging to as a Congregation that is preventing us from moving?

Perhaps we have been seduced by safety, no longer capable of being at ease with risk. Do we fear the cocoon because we do not know what might emerge? Our Nairobi Chapter invited us to 'Choose life'. To stay in the cocoon is to choose death. When the time is right that which is within the cocoon begins to emerge. Waiting turns golden. Newness unfurls. It is a time of pure unmitigated wonder. Yet, as we enter the passage of emergence, we need to remember that new life comes slowly, awkwardly, on wobbly wings. It cannot be forced; great patience is required, or else the new life is destroyed.

This journey of transition that Our Congregation is setting out on is by no means clear. There are many questions yet to be answered. Everywhere we go as TST we face questions about the future. These are all legitimate questions and we will have answers in the near future. But in the meantime, we invite you into a spirituality of waiting and discernment, into the deeper parts of yourself to listen deeply to those inner voices. You might like to take these inner movements to your journaling and spiritual direction so that when the call comes you are ready to make a response and unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning.

Am I ready for that which is new?

Am I able to leave that which I have outgrown?

Can I unfurl myself into the grace of beginning?

☞ COMES THE TIME ☞

*There comes the time for each of us
to break out of who we have become
our life a chrysalis
inside now cramped for meaning
and restless for the more.
Dare we let go the known
or cling on for dear life?
Comes the time
we pass a point of no return*

*with memories erupting from our core
life straining to open wide
its new wings in us
our struggle to resist
a betrayal of that deafening inner cry to fly.....
Ahead
A way untried
known deep inside
with trust our only guide.*

Noel Davis

Your brothers,
David, Declan, Donal, Francis, Ruvan and Sunil.