

Allergic to Change

It seems every season is an allergy season. We are all allergic to something. Some are just seasonal but still can be debilitating. Personally, I seemed to be blessed without any noticeable allergy. I have never had to go through the endless needle testing to ascertain possible allergies. I often tell people, in a tongue and cheek way, that my main allergy is an allergy to work.

It seems that all of us have one allergy in common and that is the allergy to change. It seems the only person who enjoys change is a baby with a wet diaper.

Change is a fact of life that we wish were not a fact. Leo Tolstoy once said that “Everyone thinks about changing the world but no one thinks of changing himself.”

Recently I came across a very profound reflection from a twelve year old girl. She wrote: “Look at me. I’m walking through a door. My life is changing and it’s just perfect now. No more doors for me. They’re too hard to get through. I’m staying here where it’s safe. No, child! Those doors are part of you. You can’t ignore them ‘cause they’re there. You’ve got to go through them. Who knows what you’ll find. You’ve got to meet their trial. If you don’t you won’t be what you should become. They are always gonna be doors and you can’t stop ‘em from coming. You’ve got to go through them to grow. It’s called change. Look at the wildflower; it changes all the time, always blossoming or closing up, sprouting or withering. You’re scared to go through those doors into the unknowing, ‘into change.’ You don’t know what’s going to happen. You don’t know what change is going to bring. Listen to me. Go through those doors with hope. Go through those doors knowing change is the future and you’re part of it. You don’t know what change is, that’s why you’re scared. Change is the sun booming over the horizon scattering rays of hope to a new day. Change is a baby lamb meeting the world for its first time. Change is growing from a young child to a young woman. Change is beautiful; you will learn to love it.”

It is ironic that a dramatic change came to that young girl the next day when she was killed in a car accident.

As a church, we go through several rituals of change. The sacraments are movements of change that take us through beginnings to endings; from commencements to commitments; from letting go to nourishing moments; from surrender to accomplishment; from infancy starts to maturity.

Our church is filled with its own ritual moments that can help facilitate change. It is there for all the transitional times in our lives and has a ritual to help us facilitate the change.

Of course there are the non-sacramental moments that not only suggest change but also facilitate it. We begin a new church year with Advent that suggests we change our perspective to reflect the coming of Christ, both as immediate and at the end of time. At the beginning of a new year, we make many resolutions to change attitudes and behaviors that may challenge us to change some growth-filled perspectives. We make the resolutions, knowing that beginnings do not always lead to follow through or accomplishments. Still, we continue to make similar resolutions year after year even though our spirit of enthusiasm may be strong but the mundane day to day grind may weaken our resolve.

Lent provides us with another opportunity to change, especially the roadblocks that hinder us from becoming a more spiritual person. Again, we make resolutions to grow more spiritually but often, the desire falls short not only because of the challenge but because of the implications of possible change.

Even St. Paul had difficulty with the change he felt he needed to make. In Romans 7: 18f, he says “The willing is ready at hand but doing the good is not. For I do not do the good I want but I do the evil I do not want. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells in me.”

A dab of ashes on our foreheads remind us of our humble beginnings and challenges us to journey toward our eternal destiny.

Change is not only a fact of life, it is life. Maybe it is not so much we need to live with change as we need to live as change.