

Monastic Scribe XXIV: April 1, 2022

The Times are a'Changin'

Do you like change in your life? I didn't think so. However, with modern technology, the social media and instant communications, change seems to be an ever present reality. "Stop the world. I want to get off" is an old refrain. And, yet, to stop change in our lives might be like stopping the earth from spinning.

John Henry Newman, nineteenth century theologian, and a favorite of Pope Benedict, wrote that "To live is to change, and to change often is to become more perfect". I don't think he was talking about changing your clothes, your diet, or your daily routine. But the world around us is changing. Our body is constantly changing. Not to change is to diminish and die. Change is part of God's work of creation which is an on-going happening, one that we participate in by creating with God. Evolution of the creation has been happening since the beginning and continues to slowly develop into a more conscious, completed universe.

Yet, with the present state of the world, many people fear change and work to stop it. In our country people who believe that we were once a Christian country are resistant to change. Many Evangelical Christians as well as Catholics are among these people. The possibility of white people being a minority in the USA by 2050 is a fearsome threat. This often means that they fear Women rising, Blacks, Latinos, Gays, Asians, Immigrants. I want my country as it was! At the recent Saint Patrick's Day parade in Boston, you could see a big sign, "Keep Boston Irish!" They will have to convince Irish families to have a lot more children!

Concomitant with change in the country, there is change in the church. After four hundred years of fortress like defensiveness with Protestants, the nineteenth and twentieth century witnessed new life in the church in areas of liturgy, scripture, early church scholarship, mysticism, social justice. The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) clarified all these developments in wonderful documents on the church, scripture, the modern world, as well as new understanding of Jews, democracy, other religions. But some people are still resisting the Council which has become the authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church. They want everything as it was when they were growing up. Converts to Catholicism often resent change as they believe they became Catholics because of the doctrines and rules that should always remain the same.

If you are still reading this you may ask how then do I cope in such a changing world and church? I believe stability is found within oneself. I need to know who I

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am and find myself in my basic relationships. First this means God must be real. I can't deal with this world and church without the help of a higher power. I can't rely on everything going right, depending on my possessions, power, control. Only if I am convinced that I am a loving son/daughter of a God who loves me intensely am I able to be secure and free. Only if I nurture this relationship by prayer and an intimate knowledge of God (for Christians this means in Jesus Christ) can I weather the storms of life. If I am grounded in God, then I can also be in good relationships with family, friends, even the whole world. And if my foundation is God, then I will be in right relationship with the earth and all creation. I can live with change if I can truly say, "I know who I am."

Of course not all changes are healthy. My conscience needs to be attuned to God in the ways of truth, justice, forgiveness, patience, compassion and love. Discernment is the mother of all virtues Saint Benedict says in his Rule.

Life is full of changes, some very abrupt, some very upsetting. On the emotional level I will always feel them in various degrees. We need to pay attention to our feelings and what they are telling us. But they may also be superficial and need the head to tell us what they mean. If someone we love dies, we are bereft and possibly crushed in our feelings. But we know we have to let the loved one go and I have to move on with the awareness that the person lives with us in a new way. Grieving is necessary to move to a new form of relationship with the deceased.

From nature we learn that death is part of life. Plants, suns and galaxies die and give birth to new life. Deaths, large or small, are often part of accepting change. But, with faith in God, we believe new life will emerge. Our central Christian belief is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is something much bigger than my life and existence. I am part of this larger world, part of the universal Christ. And God is calling it forth into the future with new life. The saying goes that "Life is not about you; you are about life." And life is full of change. Can you live with change? You can contact me at: joycet@glastonburyabbey.org

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Please note that I do not speak on behalf of Glastonbury Abbey, the Archdiocese of Boston or the Catholic Church, though I hope my faith is in harmony with all these. Any error in judgment should be credited to me and not anyone else.