

“....Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind....”

Lorraine d'Entremont, SC
lorain@setonspiritualityctr.ca

At the May 2016 General Assembly, CRC members engaged in conversations about 'world view'. The highest priority arising from the Assembly for implementation by the Administrative Council was: "Help us move toward a new world view, from a pyramid (colonizer) mindset to a circular model: male-female relationships, relationship to the earth, First Nations....."

What Is a World View and Why a New One?

Kathleen Dean Moore describes world view as follows: "A culture's actions, our sense of what is usual and proper, is shaped by a world view. Some people call it a *cosmology*.....It's an ethos, a set of guiding beliefs, that people swim in, often no more aware of them than a fish is aware of water."¹

A key word here is 'aware'. When we become aware that the world view out of which we live results in faulty, reckless or violent relationships with persons and all of creation, or in systemic inequalities or injustices, we sense an urgency to change it.

While growth toward more harmonious relationships is a good and sincere motive for altering one's world view, for persons in consecrated life, and indeed for committed Christians, it is not the whole story.

Changing one's world view becomes part of the ongoing transformation to which we are called, the invitation to "....be transformed by the renewing of your mind...." issued by Paul in Romans 12:2. There are other similar invitations in the scriptures, a notable one being the Beatitudes, which challenge us to see the world in a different light, to alter our world view and transform our ways of thinking.

A World of Changing World Views

It is now almost cliché to say we are living in a time of great change on our planet and in our societal structures and institutions. Many voices, including Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*, are urging us to 'renew our minds' about our relationship to the Earth and all of creation, and to change our practices to avert ecological disaster and foster equal and respectful access to the beauty and bounty of the Earth.

Throughout the world, there is growing awareness of the disharmony in relationships between women and men, with efforts being made to alter the attitudes and structures contributing to this. These are but a few of the societal signs that call us to change individually and collectively.

Simultaneously, we are aware that many of our congregations are in a phase of diminishment in their life cycle, and are seeking ways or models to name this experience. The former congregational world views no longer fit the present situation. Some identify this as a time of transformation for religious institutes.

The Experience of Transformation

While we usually desire the outcome of transformation, such as the butterfly that emerges from the caterpillar, we will generally experience resistance to the process. And with reason, for it is not an easy one to navigate personally or communally. Uncertainty characterizes this time that

some have named as 'middle space'² in our congregational experience. It is that place of knowing we need to move from where and how we have been, but being unsure of where to go, let alone knowing if we are 'there yet'. Other sectors in our society also have a similar experience.

Lynn Levo, CSJ, in her article in *LCWR Occasional Papers, Summer 2016*, says that transformation, in an institutional context, differs from change, which usually means improving on past practices, in that transformation is about acting now to create a future tomorrow. It is not just about looking different, but about being different. Feeling and intuition are important ways of knowing in this process, in addition to the education, skills and expertise on which we customarily rely.

She explains that particular feelings accompany the personal and communal wrestling that is part of transformation. Fear is common, and needs to be faced and expressed communally. Feelings of powerlessness and helplessness are also common, as well as irritability and aggression. Grieving past or anticipated losses is ongoing, as well as a sense of meaninglessness, isolation and aloneness. All of these require healthy expression and outlets, and call us to trust in God more deeply. "This is a critical time for being present, for listening deeply, especially to our emotional self, and for radical reliance on God." (Lynn Levo)

Backpack for a Transformation Journey

Backpacks make us think about what is essential or important to bring. Here are some 'travel essentials', not the ones popular advertising would promote. Bring the treasures of our rich tradition of scripture, charism and spirituality. Reflect on the transformation stories told in the bible. Probe the transformation stories of your founders and congregational history. Draw from the wisdom of our rich spiritual tradition and its teachings on dark night and discernment.

Listen to what others outside the circle of religious life are saying about the world and about us. 'The stranger has eyes we do not have' says an Ivoirian proverb. He or she and can tell us things about us that we ourselves do not see.

Bring your full self and a journal or crayons or whatever helps you tell your story to yourself and companion travellers. Pack a cushion for long rest and contemplation breaks, to sift and sort the twists and turns of the journey. Self-care and contemplation are not negotiable!

And as you ponder your experience, ask yourself these questions:
What story is this telling me about my future and our future?

What can/must I/we do for this future to take root?

¹ Moore, Kathleen Dean. *Great Tide Rising*, p. 93.

² Term used by Nancy Schreck, OSF, at LCWR 2014 Assembly.

Sources:

Leadership in the Middle Space: LCWR Occasional Papers, Winter 2015.

Living Transformation: LCWR Occasional Papers, Summer 2016.

Moore, Kathleen Dean. *Great Tide Rising: Toward Clarity and Moral Courage in a Time of Planetary Change*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2016.