

Living into Our Emerging Future

Module Two: What Do We See Ahead?

Reflection for December 1, 2024 - February 28, 2025



Personal Reflection and Prayer

To be used prior to gathering with others

Reading

“Elderhood: A Time to Become Our Charism,” Pat Kieler, SDS, Occasional Papers - Summer 2022 (provided)

Reflection

In your own prayer and quiet, reflect on these observations and questions:

- “Our current experience of change has been so abrupt and overwhelming, leaving no one unscathed. It has been soul-searing.” How have recent changes affected me and my congregation?
- “In our unknowing and undoing, we may intuit a beckoning and whispered longing for something not yet complete. This experience may be an initiation into a new life stage, some call elderhood, variously described as a movement from aging to saging, from role to soul, from doing to being, from sight to insight.” How is elderhood descriptive of my congregation? How is it, or is it not, descriptive of me personally?
- “Is the real question, ‘What has become of us?’ Or is the question rather, ‘Who are we becoming?’”
- “Immersing ourselves in our story can offer us new wisdom about ourselves and the whole of life. We all want to leave a legacy. Jesus, too, wanted progeny. What if we are the progeny of Jesus, as we’ve become a graced presence of God? Is it enough for us to have made God known? Is it enough for us to have borne fruit which carries a seed? That seed will have a life of its own. The future will be carried by God’s Spirit.”



Song

“Fear is Not My Future,” Brandon Lake and Chandler Moore -- <https://youtu.be/vwua24SV4lw?si=dakZ5Sinnwlt2Ay5>

Prayer

Blessed are you who bear the light

Blessed are you who bear the light in unbearable times,
who testify to its endurance amid the unendurable,
who bear witness to its persistence when everything seems in shadow and grief.
Blessed are you in whom the light lives, in whom the brightness blazes
your heart a chapel, an altar where in the deepest night can be seen the fire that shines forth in you in
unaccountable faith, in stubborn hope, in love that illumines every broken thing it finds.

-- Jan Richardson, *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*

Reading

“Transformation – An Experiment in Hope,” LCWR Presidential Address, Marcia Allen, CSJ, August 10, 2016 (provided)

Reflection

Marcia spoke about the future of LCWR as a conference and challenged those in attendance to come up with a new model for LCWR. Apply these insights to your congregation and to religious life as lived today in LCWR congregations broadly.

- “Many of us will remember the last word that Sharon Holland left with us last year: *Avanti* – forward!”
- “It is time to move into and embrace the processes swirling around us, and over which we have little control. We must enter the mystery of it all and engage in the experimentation and exploration and creativity that it requires to live in this 21st century mystery.”
- “We have all been struggling several decades to come to grips with the changing realities of our congregations and this Conference. The charisms hold but we are challenged to something new.”
- “Through his story of the ancient Israelites [Theologian Jurgen] Moltmann introduces a subtle intimation of what hope might be. He says that system failure – collapse – unveils what he calls the ‘horizon of expectation’ Not a vision. Not a new plan. Not even a new promise. In fact he shows that these are not necessary or even wanted. Rather, the eyesight of the imagination or the eyesight of faith, if you will, is stretched across a whole horizon of possibility, a landscape filled with potential and unlimited opportunities. And the people are invited to participate in this new horizon.”
- “We hear God saying: ‘See I am doing something new! Now it springs forth. Can you not perceive it?’ Collapse in the local picture does not mean the end of it all. No, it means that now there is a wider venue in which to bring to life the full potential of the Divine dynamic that pervades all things.”
- “We are thrust forward into a horizon – a horizon of expectation: a far-wide imaginal scape in which we can expect every possibility and potential that might await us. There before us lies a full panoply of opportunities. It seems to me that it is our responsibility here to enter into this horizon and to enter it with all our expectations.”



Prayer

You have looked at so many doors with longing,
wondering if your life lay on the other side.
For today, choose the door that opens to the inside.
Travel the most ancient way of all: the path that leads you to the center of your life.
No map but the one you make yourself.
No provision but what you already carry and the grace that comes to those who walk the pilgrim's way.
Speak this blessing as you set out and watch how your rhythm slows, the cadence of the road drawing you into the pace that is your own.
Eat when hungry. Rest when tired. Listen to your dreaming.
Welcome detours as doors deeper in. Pray for protection. Ask for the guidance you need.
Offer gladness for the gifts that come and then let them go.
Do not expect to return by the same road. Home is always by another way and you will know it not by the light that waits for you but by the star that blazes inside you telling you where you are is holy and you are welcome here.

- Jan Richardson, “The Map You Make Yourself”