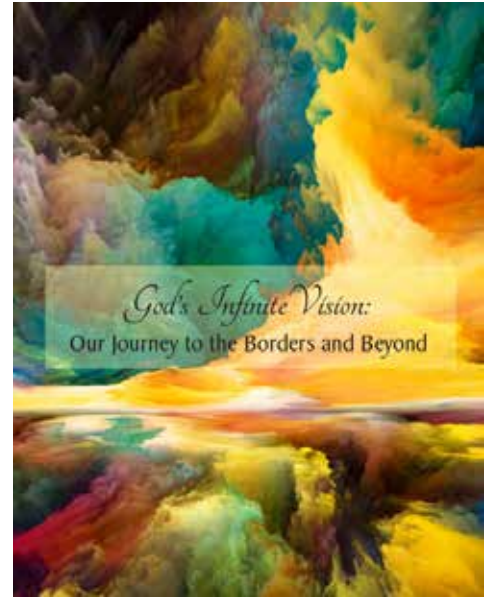


Preparing for the 2020 LCWR Assembly Reflection for the Month of June

Transforming Our Individual and Collective Grief and Trauma for the Sake of the World

As we move toward the LCWR August assembly, we do so knowing that our lives, our ministries, our very way of being have been fundamentally altered and that we carry with us deep wells of grief beyond any we have previously known. As elected leaders of our own congregations and as members of LCWR, we feel that grief in a particularly profound way as we carry not just our own grief but the collective grief of our members, and even the collective grief of the world community.

This reflection is an invitation to not simply think about our individual and collective grief as women religious, but to open ourselves to experience it deeply in ways that allow it to become the embodiment of the Paschal Mystery functioning as a transforming energy in our lives. In *The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief*, Jan Richardson writes, "...a blessing meets us in the place of deepest loss. In that place it offers us a glimpse of wholeness and claims that wholeness here and now." (p. xv) In her poem, "God of the Living" ([available here](#)) she speaks of how thin the wall between this world and the next is and invites us to lean against that wall and listen to the wisdom from the other side – the wisdom of the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us.



Scripture too is replete with reminders of the accompaniment of those who have gone before us such as found in Hebrews 11:1, 12: 1-2: "Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see....Since we ...are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every encumbrance that clings to us and persevere in running the race which lies ahead. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

We need also to listen to the invitation from the future, from those who will come after us, for as Jan Richardson reminds us in her poem "Blessing for the Brokenhearted" ([available here](#)), the only cure for love is more of it.

Reflective Process

- Listen to the song [Calm Me, Lord – Margaret Rizza – Click here](#) (*Calm me, Lord, as you calmed the storm. Still me, Lord, keep me from harm. Let all the tumult within me cease, enfold me, Lord, in your peace.*)
- Spend some time with the thoughts in the introduction above. Read and reflect on the scripture passage and the two poems.
- Take some time to lean against that wall of grief and listen to the wisdom on the other side.
- Engage in a guided meditation by Joan Halifax ([available here](#)).

LCWR Online Contemplative Dialogue

For those who choose, several opportunities are available to engage in a contemplative dialogue with other leaders online on these questions:

- How am I experiencing grief as a profoundly humanizing experience? In what ways does it open me to the depths of the Paschal Mystery? What has helped me to realize this?
- How do I experience the invitation to forgive myself for at times failing to meet the needs of my loved ones? What may the grief of this be trying to teach me/us?
- What do we find ourselves cherishing in new ways?

Questions to Carry with Us

(not to try and answer, not to work on, just to carry with us)

- How might our individual and collective grief be in service of mission?
- How might this individual and collective grief we are experiencing be carving out in us a space for the new to emerge?