

Roots and Wings

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If you think about it, life is a continuous series of transitions from one moment or experience to another. Transitions can be thrust upon us unexpectedly or arrive with anticipated forethought. They can be short bridges to lengthier periods of stability, or longer winding paths toward undetermined blocks of time. Transitions by their very definition imply movement from one state-of-being to another more settled place of unknowing. They are the harbingers of change, and whether we welcome them with open arms, or accept them with trepidation, whatever their *raison d'être*, they are also catalysts for deepening our human experience. Whether bidden or unbidden, these places of internal and sometimes external shifting offer us invaluable opportunities for reflection and growth.

Of course, there are many different kinds of transitions. Perhaps the most tangible one is moving. I recently decided to count how many times I've moved since graduating from college 41 years ago, and I was rather dismayed when I reached the number 30 because I'm also certain that I forgot a few places along the way. Even though I have been an unintended transient, I'd like to say that I've done it all with merely a backpack slung over my shoulder, but the undeniable truth is that I've accumulated a whole lot of stuff along the way...and honestly, I'm not even sure where half of it has come from.

If you are like me, the baggage train that follows us, both literally and figuratively seems to grow pretty long over the years. The cargo we carry with us from place to place is both internal and external. Some of it is precious reminders of tender times past, and therefore hard to let go. Some of it is not so precious, and equally hard to let go. **In both cases**, we have a tendency to convince ourselves that we cannot live without it all...the good, the bad, and the indifferent.

In reality, there is a part of us that wishes we could unburden ourselves of those objects and thoughts that no longer serve us, so that we might embrace the freedom of new experiences, new moments of living that are **unencumbered by the illusion that everything has to stay the same in order for us to thrive and survive**. Yet, for whatever reason, what we say we want is oftentimes not reflected in our actions. Putting word into deed is a lot easier said than done.

Have you ever had an experience, a perfect moment in time when you've said to yourself (or even out loud), "I wish this moment could last forever!" And in converse, have you ever said, "When will this moment ever end?" You see, the good news and the bad news here is that both the positive and the tough times in our lives all have one thing in common...they guarantee that nothing lasts forever...that is except for death and taxes.

(And so) when we enter periods of transition, something always gets left behind, whether it be physical or emotional or both, and we are offered a new reality that will **require us to choose** what we will take with us as we move forward...preferably something that doesn't require a box, packing tape, and a moving truck! (I've told my children that the good news, from my perspective, is that when I die I won't have to pack the box because I'll be IN the box, and someone else will get to move it!) But I digress...

Perhaps what fascinates me most about these continuous cycles of perpetual change is a curiosity as to *what sustains us* during the transition times. **What gives us roots and what gives us wings?** You might say that is an oxymoron, but I consider it to be the great paradoxical anecdote of our humanity. One only has to contemplate a deciduous tree in New England to understand this conundrum and how it parallels our own maturation and movement through the evolutionary process of transition and transformation.

With each seasonal change, the tree's roots grow deeper, its core grows stronger, and its branches reach higher and higher toward the light. There are moments of enormous creativity, bursting transformation, quiet status quo, epic brilliance, and finally letting go, shedding itself of seeds for new growth as well as a letting go of that which no longer serves it. Then the constant return to the internal stirrings that will perpetuate the cycle.

What is rather significant to consider is that the tree, itself, has no control over how it will handle this process, it just does it. It could not remain in bud forever and still survive. While we, on the other hand, do have choices, the consequences of our denial to keep progressing are the same. Here I am reminded of the quote by Anaïs Nin, *And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.* Both as individuals and as a congregation, the internal work we do in our places of transition can make all the difference in how we will grow and mature into our next transformational stage.

So, here we find ourselves as a community in transition, having entered into the internal stage of reflection and renewal. **This is a time for nurturing those core principles that strengthen our root system which grounds us in the deeper truths that sustain us.** This is a time for taking stock of our branches and twigs and dreaming about what we want to grow through them that one day our values will take flight and bring our message of hope into the world. This is a time for embracing change, for acknowledging what has been, *for holding close what is essential*, for letting go what will no longer serve us, and for dreaming what we want to create as we move into the future. **This transitional period of reflection and renewal is a critical stage in the co-creative evolutionary process that life offers us time and time again.** This is true for us as individuals, and certainly true for us as a community. Times of transition, as welcome or difficult as they might be, are times of opportunity for meaningful growth.

A tree cannot remain in bud forever and still survive. It must answer the call to transform itself. So. Must. We.

Amen and Blessed Be.