

Change and Transformation

Summarizing points by Joan Borysenko

In light of our Lenten and Holy Week journey, we may see parallels here, in our own experiences and learning.

“There are three classical stages of change that constitute a rite of passage – for instance, from the acorn to the oak or from the caterpillar to the butterfly...”

The three stages of transformation:

Separation, the journey begins. When we experience news of a diagnosis, have an illness, job loss, or death of a loved one, we feel as if we are falling into an abyss. We are separated from what was. “The human response is fear. At a deeper level, however, a spiritual process is beginning to unfold.” Our shell cracks and our world falters. We are invited to enter the ritual process of transformation.

Dwelling at the threshold: surrendering to the unknown. According to anthropologist, Victor Turner, a time of transformation is “the time between no longer and not yet. We have died to who we were and are not yet reborn to who we might become. We are at the doorway, the threshold of new potential.” In the unknown we face challenges, find allies, learn trust and acceptance of our reality.

The return: transformation and rebirth. The caterpillar dies to itself, lives at the threshold in its chrysalis, and is finally reborn as a butterfly. The butterfly is beauty and inspiration just by being present. “Our spiritual transformation entails dying to the false self with its fears, attachments, and need to control.” In rebirth we can align with God and the larger whole.

Life is a journey of the unknown. The challenge is to “pay attention, heal what needs healing, and grieve what we’ve lost as a testimony to how precious it has been.” There is certainty that change calls us to answer by finding peace, joy and service.