Columns
Religious Life



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by Teresa Anyabuike

Contributor

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Change is dynamic and constant. It comes with its beauty of freedom and challenges. Change, or transition, as I would use the two words interchangeably, is what everyone longs for, especially when it's positive. The positivity of transition depends on the person who is experiencing it.

Transition from one ministry, community or country to another can be joyful, frustrating, filled with apprehension, or a mix of emotions. This is true whether one has lived or worked in a place for only a short time and is just getting acquainted with the people and surroundings, or for a long time and has formed strong bonds. One might be eager to leave the place or want to remain for personal reasons.

Whatever the reason for any transition, one has to discern what God wants of her at that time and ask for the grace to embrace the changes that come with it.

Transition within the same community has its challenges and freedom. I lived in a community where new members were transferred to the community. I had to begin to learn how best to live with them and vice versa. Since everything in life is a learning process, I made efforts to learn their likes and dislikes as they learned mine, too, for a peaceful coexistence in the community. Though, it wasn't an easy task because we stepped on each other's toes and just tolerated one another.

A friend of mine shared her experience of transition with me. She was in charge of a ministry for about six years and was transferred to another ministry within the same community. New members were also transferred to her community to work in her former ministry. They all became members of the same community, with different ministries.

Some became friends and bonded with each other. It was very exciting for those who bonded, and not comfortable for those who were struggling to tolerate each other.

My friend was happy with her new ministry but was struggling to live agreeably with the new members of the community. She felt excluded in conversation, and sometimes information was not communicated well to her. She felt sad and became angry with the situation.

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She said, "I felt I might be exaggerating, but I'm sure that something is not right."

She also gave an example of when a visitor came to the community, and no one informed her. And when a decision was made for the community, she was unaware because none in the community shared with her.

According to my friend, she was trying hard not to be oversensitive and excused all that had been happening. She took everything to God in prayer and asked for the best way to handle the issues.

One day, she decided to speak with her sisters in the community to ascertain why she was not included in matters concerning the community. She was happy she did, because the sisters didn't act intentionally to hurt her. They apologized to her for not being sensitive.

Many times, we tend to conclude that people act intentionally to hurt us without checking to see if this is true. Presumptions have really caused a lot of problems in different ministries and communities, because sisters are unaware that the real cause of the situation is transition.

When I was transferred to a new community and ministry, I felt alone because I had not lived or worked with the new members of my community and ministry. It took me time to adjust to community living and to better interact with my sisters. I was happy I did. I felt integrated and a part of the community and ministry.

In one of my experiences, I felt sad about the relationship I had with one of the communities where I lived because things were no longer the same after new members arrived. I found myself being angry for no good reason, and reacting rather than responding to issues.

I spoke with my spiritual director about it. She helped me to discover that I was having a transition issue. I began to work on myself so I could accept the changes in the community. I went from challenges to the freedom of transition. It was an inward journey of self-emptying and surrendering to God for a better me. I'm grateful to God for the experience and the joy I feel now remembering it.

From my own experience, transition is amazing. It comes with its own challenges. What makes it amazing is surrendering to the changes it brings through prayer and opening of oneself to the fruit of prayer. Every transition is unique and dynamic.

Whatever our experiences are, we should always remember that we are not alone. We will be happier if we open ourselves to embrace the changes God brings our way.