

EMBRACING
VULNERABILITY
ON THE SYNODAL
JOURNEY



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Embracing Our Vulnerability: A gesture of humility or a call to transformation?

Dr. Ted Dunn, May 5, 2023

*"For when I am weak, then I am strong."
2 Corinthians 12:10*

Thomas Merton once said: *"Humans have a responsibility to find themselves where they are, in their own proper time and place in the history to which they belong and to which they must inevitably contribute either their response or their evasions, either truth and act, or mere slogan and gesture."* Merton's words present us with challenge. Is "embracing our vulnerability" a mere slogan, a gesture of humility, or is it a genuine call to transformation, an invitation to take responsibility for our lives, to take hold of our humanity and act accordingly? Let's explore together what it really means to embrace our vulnerability, how this could be done, and what might be your role as leaders in facilitating this endeavor in your own community.

Context: A Great Turning and the Journey of Transformation

This is a time of living between two stories, a kind of intervening time we can all feel, even if we cannot yet articulate the new narrative. Why does it hurt when we hear of another person being harmed? Why, when we read of the coral reefs dying and glaciers melting, does it feel nauseating? The reason it hurts is literally because it's happening to ourselves, our extended selves. Maybe we can't grasp it entirely, but we know it in our gut. The old story is dying and a new one is emerging from our collective consciousness.

I refer to this kind of spiraling shift in consciousness, the movement toward a new story, as a Great Turning. I want to recognize this Great Turning as the ground from which a new story is emerging for Religious Life, as well. I believe you have

a key role to play and are on the leading edge of a new consciousness that is emerging across our globe.

Our world has arrived at a crossroads putting before us an existential choice. We can either respond in fear by circling the wagons and closing in on ourselves, or we can listen for the “deeper invitation” and partner with others to birth a new way of being. If we are driven by fear, we will, by default, end up following the path of least resistance that leads inevitably to death. If impelled by courage, however, we can choose to walk the ancient path toward new life. I pray that we will listen to the heartbeat of the new and respond wholeheartedly to the lure and love of God.

Religious life is part and parcel of this Great Turning. What is becoming increasingly clear is that what got you today won't get you to tomorrow. Pope Francis, speaking plainly to us last year, said: “We don't need frozen nuns.” This synodal journey is an effort to move us beyond the past and together discern a new way to the future. We are being called to walk together, to discern together, to collaborate in creating a future full of hope (Jeremiah 29:11).

We cannot travel to the future without honoring our past, our ancestors, and our traditions, but these cannot lead us there. We need to include and transcend the past, loosen our grip on time-honored traditions and ghost-structures of the past, in order to make room for the new. What leads us into the future is our *courage*, *creativity*, and *tenacity* to give life to our deepest longings called forth by the lure and love of God. Honoring the past cannot mean living in the past. Honoring our ancestors cannot mean living as they lived. If we truly honor those who have brought us to today, we must do for the next generation what our ancestors did for us: We must make room for the new.

Helen Keller once said: “A bend in the road is not an end in the road, unless you fail to make the turn.” The vast majority of communities will fail to make the turn to the future. Some will wait until it is too late and, by the time they wake up, they will have exhausted their resources and their will to change. Others will make only incremental changes, believing they are doing what's needed, only to discover their safe, small changes are not nearly enough.

Some of the most resilient communities will successfully make this bend in the road and bring forth new life. They will have a hand in facilitating the emergence of a new Religious Life and they will put their mark on this Great Turning. They will not simply adapt to changing world, they will listen for the deeper invitation, engage in the inner work of transformation, and bring forth new life to their communities and our world.

To get to that deeper invitation, let's briefly recall the difference between change and transformation. Change is an external event, a new arrangement of things, and, sometimes, an invitation to transform. However, as they say in Alcoholics Anonymous, "You can change where you live, but you take your patterns with you."

In other words, if we change only the surface things and ignore the deeper work, the old story will migrate to a new venue. We take it with us to our new relationships, new places of ministry, or new places of living. Over the years we become imprisoned by these old stories, old structures, old ways of thinking, and patterned ways of living. In other words, you can make external changes, but that's not the same as a transformation.

Transformation, in contrast, is an internal process, a journey that shifts the meaning and purpose of our lives. It shifts the patterns and practices of our lives and the structures that support them. It shifts our identity and realigns our soul with its outward expression. It is what Carl Jung meant when he said: "The greatest problems in life can never be solved, only outgrown." Transformation is not problem solving. It is a maturational leap, a soul to surface realignment of life. It is, at its heart, a journey of faith.

The Divine Paschal Mystery of transformation is beyond our comprehension, but it surely does not happen without our active participation. Sitting in a prison cell, a young Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, "Human progress never rolls on the wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men (and women) willing to be co-workers with God." You can either try to plan your future or create the conditions for grace to intercede. To do the former, you must presume to know what the future is. To do the latter, you need to learn how to cooperate with grace and do the inner work of transformation.

Last year I shared what it means to be at a crossroads and the opportunity it holds to make deeper connections with the Divine. I spoke of Death Valley, the hottest, driest place in the United States. Nothing grows there because it doesn't rain. However, on rare occasions, against all odds, it does rain in Death Valley. And when it does, the entire floor of Death Valley becomes carpeted in flowers, a phenomenon called a "super bloom." What this tells us is that Death Valley isn't really dead. It's dormant. Right beneath the barren surface are seeds of possibility waiting for the right conditions to come about. In other words, in organic systems, *if the conditions are right, life is inevitable. It happens all the time.* In your communities, in Religious Life, in our Church, if the conditions are right, life is inevitable. It happens all the time.

Reflection

As co-workers with God, what do you see as your community's role in this Great Turning?

What are the stories your community tells itself that are no longer true?

As you listen to the heartbeat of the New, what is the new story emerging in your community?

Dynamic Elements of Transformation

Last year, I outlined the kind of soulwork needed to create the conditions for grace to intercede and to do our part as co-workers with God. Let me now describe more fully each of the five dynamic elements or key processes that, when used to engage communities in the inner work of transformation, create the conditions for new life to emerge. As you listen to these, note the depth of vulnerability each of them requires.

Shifts in Consciousness: Creating a new narrative

Albert Einstein famously taught us that we cannot solve today's problems with the same level of consciousness that gave rise to them. Healers have always known this as they emphasize the need to shift the perspectives, patterns, emotions, and beliefs in which our wounds are otherwise embedded. Ultimately, a shift in perspective or transformation of consciousness enables us to write new narratives for our lives, ones that are authentic, liberating, and life-enhancing. Pouring new wine into new wineskins enables new life to emerge (Matthew 9:16-17).

For your community, this involves a shift in perspective regarding the meaning and purpose of your lives, reframing what mission and community mean to you, and rewriting the narrative of your communal faith journey. Beyond this shift in perspective, though, there is the deeper work of growing toward higher levels of consciousness. For communities this requires practicing mindfulness and other approaches to awaken and expand your personal and collective consciousness. Without this collective shift, or deeper transformation of consciousness, communities would see and, therefore, shape the future much as they have in the past. A new consciousness helps you to recognize the stories you are telling yourselves that are no longer true and to open up new narratives more fitting with who you are becoming.

Reclaim our Inner Voice: The seat and source of everything that lives

“There is in all visible things ... a hidden wholeness,” says Thomas Merton. In every turn of the spiral, every maturational leap, we shed worn out vestiges of ourselves and claim anew our own inner voice, the seat and source of everything that lives. When we are broken and brought to our knees and have drifted from our own soul’s desires, we eventually reach a point where this is no longer tenable. Our false self crumbles in the face of hypocrisy and we know our lives to be inauthentic. We start the long road back to reclaiming our true selves. We return to the hidden source of life reclaiming and re-authenticating our inner voice, renewing our soul, and claiming our life in a whole new way. It is a heroic journey that brings us home to our true selves, to those we love, and to God.

For communities this means taking off your masks and laying down your defensive armor in order to engage in highly intimate conversations about your deepest longings. It requires rebuilding trust and restoring the green space for growth to occur inside community. It means going through your own dark night as a community to become more real, to come home to your true selves, and reclaim your inner voice. It is a journey for heroic communities to reclaim their soul, the seat and source of their existence. Without this soul work communities will merely make changes on the surface and build a house of cards as their vision for the future.

Reconciliation and Conversion: The womb of our becoming

Parker Palmer tells us, “Wholeness does not mean perfection – it means embracing brokenness as an integral part of life.” *We spiral toward greater wholeness and connection through reconciliation and conversion, the womb of our becoming.*

Reconciliation and conversion are at the very heart of transformation. There can be no transformation without healing our unhealed wounds and no one can do this for us. Healing our personal wounds, reconciling our relationships, and restoring wholeness to what has become separated and torn apart, comprise the ongoing work of conversion and the pathway to new life. This inner work is the crucible of transformation, the womb of our becoming.

Religious are not immune to brokenness. Communities, like any longstanding group, accumulate baggage, years of unresolved wounds, and conflicts. Working through these conflicts, reconciling relationships, and healing the wounds of community is the heart-work of transformation. It is also the Achilles’ heel for communities as none will succeed without proper training and assistance. It is painful personal and interpersonal work which most communities avoid. Without this work of reconciliation and conversion, though, there will be no

transformation. Members will become more emotionally distanced and the collective whole will become increasingly fragmented.

Experimentation and Learning: Acting our way into a new way of being

Lady Julian of Norwich once said: “First there is the fall, and then we recover from the fall. Both are the mercy of God!” Each new turn of the spiral demands experimentation and learning, requiring us to act our way into a new way of being. We have no clear picture, no clear path, and no guarantees of success as we grope and intuit our way forward. We live our lives forward but understand them backward. Transforming old ways into new ways means experimenting and learning. This requires risking failure and getting more comfortable with being uncomfortable. It means acting our way into a new way of being. It means fumbling without perfection before we have it all figured out. It means learning from our mistakes rather than shaming and blaming others.

For a religious community, it means becoming a *learning community*. Being a learning community requires letting go of the need to prove how much you already know. This involves breaking entrenched communal norms, parting from tradition, and behaving in novel ways that are outside your comfort zone. It involves trying things differently rather than just trying harder. It means making mistakes and learning from them. It requires acting your way into a new way of being, instead of succumbing to paralysis by analysis. Without experimenting, incubating new and creative possibilities, risking new ventures, and partnering in new ways, there will be no transformation. It is, as Teilhard de Chardin taught us, evolution in action.

Transformative Visioning: Gather the wisdom, weave a dream

The Irish poet, John O'Donohue, wrote: “I would love to live like a river flows, carried by the surprise of its own unfolding.” Each new turn in the spiral is a process of transformative visioning where we gather the wisdom and weave a new dream. Each new turn in the spiral twists the kaleidoscope and brings into view an entirely new picture.

Transformation involves listening to our deepest longings and greatest aspirations to create a new vision for the future. It requires letting go of what is no longer true, real or life-giving and listening to God's call to new life. It is an organic, emergent, and continually iterative process of visioning the future. It involves taking steps without having the full picture, seeing what emerges, and taking the next best step in light of new understandings.

For your communities this requires using more than just the conventional approaches to planning and visioning. When the problems are clear and the solutions are known, conventional approaches may be adequate. However, when

engaged in deep change in search of new life, known maps and traditional ways of planning are inadequate. Your communities need new approaches for planning and visioning, ones that will aid in the work of transformation, tap your deepest longings and create opportunities for new life to emerge.

These five dynamic elements are universally involved in both personal and communal transformation. They are ways of doing our part to cooperate with grace and create the conditions for new life to emerge. What it comes down to, and this inner work requires, is our willingness to let down our defenses and embrace our own vulnerability with radical dependence on the grace of God. It requires that we take off our masks and embrace the full measure of what means to be human, not just our gifts, strengths, and intellect, but our foibles, frailties, and raw emotions. For our transformation to be effective we must seek out the maximum amount of tolerable vulnerability.

This pathway to deep change and transformation, clearly, is not for the faint of heart. It takes courage to risk rejection when we open our hearts and share our true selves with others. It takes courage to surrender and let go of the people and places we once loved, a way of life we once cherished, to give way to the new life. It takes courage to reconcile, to offer and seek forgiveness, and to pursue our deepest longings in the face of resistance from our family, friends, and community. And for communities who choose to go down this path, to take this Exodus journey, they will need leaders who courageously embrace and model their own vulnerability, and who create the soul-dwelling spaces for their members do the same.

Courage, of course, is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to act in the face of it. The root word for “courage” is heart; it means to have heart. We need to dispel the myth and the prevailing masculine norms that being vulnerable is some kind of character flaw. Somehow, we have this myth, not only in our secular world but our Church, that leaders are supposed to portray unwavering strength, to act professional, to barricade themselves in certainties, and to mask any emotion that could belie this portrayal. They are supposed to armor themselves against hurt or rejection and pretend that they are cool and calm when they’re not. They are supposed to speak from their intellect and hide their heart and soul. It’s lunacy and causes great harm!

Despite these norms, cross-cultural studies on leadership make it abundantly clear that the most important qualities of a leader are to be grounded, honest, real, and relatable. A credible leader is someone courageous enough to risk the possibility of failure or of looking like a fool in pursuit of something more noble. Isn’t that what your founders and foundresses did? How can you be a credible

leader if you are not passionate about what you are doing, generous in sharing your gifts and talents, grounded and humble enough to share your mistakes and vulnerabilities? We need to dispel that myth that vulnerability and productivity are mutually exclusive. High performance leaders use their vulnerability as a source of motivation, passion, and creativity.

People need leaders who are compassionate, not just clever; empathic, not just smart; real and relatable, not lofty and aloof. We need leaders who inspire us because of their humanity, not in spite of it. Wasn't this what Jesus did for us? He didn't armor-plate his heart and grow a "thicker skin," as so many leaders are advised to do. He didn't hide from others, preach from the pulpit, or stay out of the fray. He was right in there with us, entirely vulnerable, risking it all, utterly divine in his humanity. Isn't this why we are inspired by the lives of Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Teresa of Ávila, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, and Oscar Romero? Isn't that what moves us when we hear the Dalia Lama, Greta Thunberg, Desmond Tutu, Amanda Gorman, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Malala Yousafzai, and all those who gift us with their passion, presence, humility, and humanity?

Reflection

Pope Francis tells us: "Without vulnerability... there would be no true humanity." Thus, to deny our vulnerability is to deny our humanity. How much of your true self is present in community and in what ways do you deny your vulnerabilities, your humanity?

Embracing our vulnerability, living in the fullness of our humanity with hearts wide open, is what transforms us. The only people who don't experience being vulnerable are those without empathy or compassion. Those who embrace it know its beauty, its creative potential; they know that being vulnerable is what makes us human and has the power to heal and transform hearts. They have come to know that we can't selectively numb out our fear, shame, or guilt without also extinguishing our joy, love, and compassion. Those who embrace it in themselves can embrace it in others.

A woman of color recently returned to her motherhouse of predominately white sisters to attend a gathering I was facilitating. She told us that when she comes to the motherhouse, she wears a "breastplate" to guard her heart from

anticipated judgement and prejudice. We have learned through life experiences to guard our hearts and protect ourselves from judgements, ridicule, racism, betrayal, and hurts of all kind. At community gatherings across every culture, I see sisters who are afraid to speak honestly, openly, and directly for fear of judgement. These aren't just introverts. These are women who go along to get along and hide their true selves.

The same is true for leaders. I see leaders who can plan and organize with ease, but shy away from sharing their feelings. They hide their tears when hurting and their anger when fuming. I see leaders who work themselves to the bone and I wonder: where is the joy in their life? I see leaders afraid to say, "I don't know," "I don't have the answers" or "I can't do this by myself." Too many leaders are too afraid to acknowledge, let alone embrace their vulnerability. Consequently, too many leaders leave their term exhausted, wounded or physically ill.

Leaders and members alike come by this shyness in sharing honestly. We are all afraid of being vulnerable because we have all, at one time or another, been wounded. Religious Life reinforced this avoidance of self-exposure. Residual effects remain today from earlier years wherein silence was a virtue, custody of the eyes and chapter of faults were the rule, particular friendships were to be avoided, and other such norms worked against any honest self-disclosure and wholesome intimacy. The corporate world has even greater barriers with its emphasis on power and control, making it harder for Religious to stand in humility against a secular world.

Another common occurrence that I witness across communities is that I hear members defend leaders who are publicly criticized at assemblies by imploring other members to "trust leadership!" This does not build trust. Communities need skills of *trust-tending* to know how to build trust and repair it when it breaks down. I hear leaders tagging too many conversations as "confidential," afraid of how others might manage sensitive issues. This does not teach members how to manage their boundaries. Members need to learn the difference between secrecy, privacy, and confidentiality and how to establish clear and permeable boundaries. Too many leaders try to be parents instead of partners, telling their members what they should do, or doing for others what they could do for themselves, instead of empowering them in their efforts to learn.

The answer to the challenges you face today cannot be to armor your hearts, stay hidden and build fortresses at this bend in the road. That is not "the way and the life" that Jesus modeled for us (John 14:6). It is not the way of the ancient path that Jeremiah spoke of (6:16). These are not the conditions wherein new life emerges. You cannot, with any integrity as leaders, ask others to do their inner

work and embrace their vulnerability if you yourselves are not engaged in this work.

As leaders, you need to create the conditions for new life to emerge. You need to create safe spaces, green spaces where members can fumble and fail, unlearn, relearn, and grow. You need to tame your fears of the “alien other” and learn how to reach across our differences. This won’t happen by Chapter decree or by compliance with your authority. You need to acquire new mind-sets, heart-sets and skill-sets if you are to bring forth a new way of being. This requires more than a weekend workshop attended by a handful of people. Communal transformation requires personal, communal, and systemic change, involving all members in a Journey of Transformation.

Reflection

What new mind-sets, heart-sets, and skill-sets are needed in your community?

What might be your role as leader to help your community acquire these?

Embracing our vulnerability by reclaiming our inner voice

While each of the five dynamic elements of transformation require an acceptance of our vulnerability, the one I’d like to go a deeper with today is *Reclaiming our inner voice: the seat and source of everything that lives.*

In many ways this is shadow work. It requires reclaiming those parts of me that I’ve otherwise suppressed because of shame or self-condemnation. These are the parts of me that, if reclaimed, put me at risk for rejection by others, exposing me to the judgment of others as uncaring, unworthy, untouchable or in some way unlovable. Reclaiming my inner voice, means embracing my whole self, my true self, my vulnerabilities, and my strengths. So, let me share a snippet of that from my own life and invite you to reflect on yours. Have you ever experienced what I experienced?

Confessions of a Hypocrite

Have you ever reached a point where the life you were living was no longer the life that wanted to live in you? It’s that painful realization that you are living a life that is no longer your own, a life no longer tethered to your own soul. Perhaps you suddenly realized that who you were to others was nothing more than a

mashup of personas, a mixture of masks, rather than a reflection of your authentic self. Or maybe you woke up one day and thought, *How the hell did I get here?* It's worse than losing your car keys, your wallet, or your cell phone. It's that dreaded feeling that somehow, some way, you've lost yourself and that the life you are living is no longer yours. You're an imposter.

For example, have you ever had the thought while ministering to others that you were not living the very life you were encouraging them to live? Perhaps you were inviting them to live more honestly, intimately, authentically, or courageously, while you were fudging it a bit in your own life. Maybe you've counseled others to address issues they were avoiding, to reconcile relationships they hadn't mended, or to seek healing for themselves, while you had avoided these same domestic chores in your own life. Have you ever *not* practiced what you preached and found yourself disgusted with your own hypocrisy? I have.

Early in my career, I had a thriving clinical practice. I was growing as a psychotherapist and becoming more adept at helping others to heal and grow. I had compassion for their suffering, and insights to offer, because I had experienced suffering in my own life and I was professionally trained. Ironically, though, I had little insight into my own suffering and was only dimly aware as to the origins of my empathy. I hadn't put together the reasons for my suffering, its impact upon my psyche, or the narrative I had created in my own soul. I had only an inkling, at that point, that the persona I presented to my family and friends had drifted far from its source. In my personal life I was living a life separated from my soul, while, as a therapist, I was becoming more aligned with it.

I was becoming increasingly aware of and uncomfortable with this contrast experience. I was one person as a therapist (more capable of intimacy, more authentic, and more capable of challenging myself and others), and quite another with family and friends (superficial, hidden, and sticking to my motto of *peace at any price*). I was becoming increasingly conscious of and uncomfortable with my own hypocrisy. I was not practicing at home what I was preaching in my office, and it was gnawing at my soul. I had fashioned a persona for others to see and was living a life untethered from my own inner voice.

Well, needless to say, this ever-widening chasm between my inner life and my outer life fomented into a crisis. I was terrified as I sat on the client-side of the couch waiting for my therapist to come into the room. *I guess this is how my clients feel when they first sit down in my office. This sucks!* When he opened the door, before he even had a chance to sit down with his comfortable cup of coffee, I glared at him and said, "My entire life is on the line. This had better work!" To

which he replied, nonchalantly, without missing a beat, “Well, that’s entirely up to you.”

The crossroads I had reached was about to test me in ways I had never been tested before. I had no idea where the journey would lead, what it might uncover, how long it might take, what it might cost me, or what might come of it. Did I really want to grow or should I just stay hidden? I knew that my storybook marriage of 11 years could easily collapse if I chose to confront this house of cards. Just when it seemed that my life had become what I hoped it would – a comfortable house, a “nice” marriage with three beautiful children, and a promising career – it was all at risk if I chose to confront my own inauthenticity and lack of integrity. This really sucked!

It was a “come-to-Jesus” moment, a crossroads in my own life, that only in hindsight could I fully know as *graced*. There was a deeper voice inside that I had ignored for too long and I had paid a terrible price. I had a choice, push this inner voice further away or start to listen. I chose to listen. What I heard was the liberating love of God luring me back to life.

Sometimes we put on roles rather live in alignment with that deep inner well fed by its pure source. We get compassion fatigue and wonder if we are devoted to an illusion. Sometimes it is too shameful to talk about. We end up estranged from ourselves and others. The slow work of God, the murky nature of it all, the inevitable wrong turns, and impasses, can cause confusion and shake our confidence. The stakes are enormous. This had better work! So, enough about me. Let us look at your life.

Reflection

Is your life aligned with the soul of who you are, or have you drifted unknowingly from the life you were meant to live? What is your life telling you about who you are growing to become?

Are you living a life that is comfortable or are you still growing into the person God intends for you to be? Do you really want to grow, or might you want to stay hidden?

Embrace your vulnerability as an act of homecoming

Private pain is a legacy of Western individualism. We are conditioned to accept the notion of private pain, depriving ourselves and others of the very things we require to stay emotionally vital: community, ritual, nature, compassion, contemplation, beauty, and love. What is the pain that is all of ours that lingers in our collective soul?

I believe that loneliness is perhaps the deepest suffering of our time. Even though we are Zooming, texting, and emailing for hours, it does not reduce our loneliness. We are not connected to others because, too often, we are not connected to ourselves. We are not taking the time to breathe, to sit in silence, and get in touch with what we are feeling, to know our bodies and our minds. We need to come home to ourselves, to our souls, and to our God. We need to quiet ourselves and focus on our breathing to free ourselves from dwelling in the past and fretting about the future. We need to be present in the here and now to be truly free.

Once we come home to ourselves, once we are free, present, and grounded, we can listen to our own suffering. We can go back and take care of it. We can listen to our anger, shame, or sadness so that we can grieve, reconcile and heal. These feelings are like a small child tugging at our sleeves. Pick up these feelings and hold them tenderly. Acknowledge them without judgement or pushing them away. *Embrace your vulnerability as an act of homecoming.*

We know that the suffering inside us contains the suffering of our ancestors, our fathers and mothers, and their fathers and mothers. They may not have had a chance, or known how, to heal their suffering, so they may have passed it along to us. If we can transform, rather than transmit, our suffering, we are healing our parents, our ancestors, along with ourselves. We are healing the suffering in the world, the suffering of those with whom we minister, the suffering in our communities.

If we understand our own unfinished hurts, if we embrace our own vulnerabilities, we will be better able to embrace others in theirs. It is for this reason, we need suffering because it brings forth empathy, compassion, and love, if, like this child tugging at our sleeves, we can acknowledge it, embrace it, understand it, and allow God's grace to transform it.

If you want to help others in their homecoming, you must love them and set them free. To love them, you must understand their vulnerability and to do this, you must embrace your own. If you can understand and embrace your own, you can walk in their shoes with compassion and without judgment. Do not turn your back on your own vulnerability and unfinished hurts that tug at your sleeves. Do your

inner work so that you can allow God to transform your heart and thus transform our world.

Now is not the time to lose faith in our future nor is it a time to lose our nerve. Now is a time of reckoning and it is in these times that we are tested, tested to our very soul. Now we will learn how large or small is our heart, how merciful, how caring, how faithful, how responsible we have yet to be. I pray that all of us have the strength to remember that life is fragile. We are all vulnerable. We will all, at some point in our lives, stumble, and fall. We must carry this in our hearts: What we have been given is very special; it can be taken from us and, when it is taken from us, we will be tested to our very souls. It is in these times, and in this kind of pain, that we are invited to look deep inside ourselves, follow the ancient path and count on Love to pull us through.

Reflection

How is embracing vulnerability key to your personal and communal transformation?

What place does it have in this synodal journey, or the transformation of our Church and world?

Is this notion of “embracing our vulnerability” a mere slogan, a gesture of humility, or is this God’s call to us for deep change and transformation?
