

Reflections From The Crossroads

Transformation, Leadership, and Religious Life

FIRST REFLECTION | SEEING WITH NEW EYES



Introductory Note

This first reflection is less a formal newsletter than an opening door. Many of you receiving this have walked with me in one way or another: through chapters, assemblies, leadership conversations, retreats, transitions, endings, beginnings, and more than a few moments when no one was quite sure what came next. We have shared conversations about transformation, religious life, leadership, grief, hope, surrender, and the strange grace of threshold times. I want to continue those conversations in a more regular way.

That history matters.

I am beginning these occasional reflections because I want to stay in conversation with you about what I am noticing in religious life, leadership, faith-based communities, and the deeper work of transformation. Some reflections will draw from my earlier writing. Some will arise from current conversations. Some will point to trends I am watching. Most will begin with the question I keep hearing beneath many different conversations: What is being asked of us now?

This is not meant to be another newsletter full of noise. There is enough of that, and most of us are already over-subscribed to things we meant to read.

My hope is simpler. I want each reflection to offer a small piece of interpretation. Something to ponder, test, question, or bring into conversation with others.

This first reflection returns to a theme many of you will recognize: seeing with new eyes. I return to it because it feels more urgent now. Many communities, organizations, leaders, and seekers are no longer approaching the crossroads. They are living inside it.

And the work now is not panic.

It is attention.

Seeing With New Eyes

There are seasons when the old maps no longer help.

They may have served us well for years. They may have helped us build institutions, guide communities, raise families, lead organizations, and make sense of our lives. Then something shifts. The old assumptions begin to wobble. The trusted answers no longer fit the questions being asked. What once felt stable now feels strangely unfinished.

This is often where transformation begins.

Not in clarity. Not in control. Not in the polished confidence that we know what comes next.

Transformation often begins at a crossroads, where something in us knows we cannot keep doing what we have been doing, at least not in the same way. We may try, of course. Most of us do. We tighten the belts. We revise the plan. We work harder. We improve the systems. We make new versions of old approaches and hope they will carry us forward.

Sometimes they help.

But sometimes they simply delay the deeper work.

In my years of working with religious communities, leadership teams, and faith-based organizations, I have seen this again and again. Communities can spend enormous energy adapting to change while quietly avoiding transformation. They can restructure ministries, revise governance, sell buildings, develop strategic plans, and still leave untouched the deeper questions of identity, grief, courage, imagination, and grace.

The same is true for individuals.

We can change the calendar, the commitments, the routines, the outward arrangement of our lives. All of that may be needed. But transformation asks something more intimate. It asks us to see differently. To listen beneath the surface. To notice what we are clinging to. To ask what wants to die, what wants to live, and what we are being invited to become.

Change rearranges the furniture.

Transformation asks whether we are still living in the right house.

This deeper work is not abstract. It is painfully practical. It requires us to tell the truth about what is no longer working. It asks us to stop confusing activity with vitality. It invites us to grieve what is passing without turning grief into paralysis. It asks us to make room for the small signs of new life that are easy to miss because they rarely arrive with a trumpet.

Often, they arrive as a question.

What are we being invited to see now?

What truth have we been managing rather than facing?

What are we trying to preserve that may no longer be able to carry life?

What would become possible if we listened more carefully for what is most alive?

Religious life knows this terrain well. So do many leaders, families, and seekers. We are living in a time when the pressures are real: diminishment, aging, polarization, institutional fatigue, ecological crisis,

religious disaffiliation, financial strain, and the quiet exhaustion that comes from trying to hold together too much for too long.

Still, the crossroads is not only a place of loss.

It can also be a place of grace.

A graced crossroads is not a comfortable place. It rarely feels graceful at first. It may feel like confusion, vulnerability, or failure. But beneath the disruption there may be a deeper invitation: to live less from fear and more from freedom; to stop defending old forms long after life has moved elsewhere; to cooperate with grace in ways that are more honest, more courageous, and more generative.

This is not passive work.

It is not waiting around for God to do what we are unwilling to face.

It is a form of participation. We cooperate with transformation by doing the inner work: shifting consciousness, reclaiming our truest voice, healing what has been divided, experimenting with new ways of being, and gathering the wisdom needed to weave a more life-giving future.

No one can engineer transformation.

But we can create conditions where transformation is more likely to take root.

We can slow down enough to see. We can listen with more humility. We can stop pretending the old answers are enough. We can tell the truth without cruelty. We can grieve without surrendering imagination. We can risk small experiments instead of waiting for perfect certainty. We can ask better questions.

That may be where seeing with new eyes begins.

Not with a grand vision. Not yet.

Perhaps it begins with one honest admission:

We cannot become what we are called to become by simply protecting what we have already been.

That sentence is hard.

It is also merciful.

Because once we stop pretending, a different kind of seeing becomes possible. We begin to notice where life is still moving. We begin to hear the quieter invitations. We begin to recognize that the future is not asking us to abandon our deepest charism, vocation, or purpose. It may be asking us to release the forms that can no longer carry them.

At the crossroads, the task is not to panic.

The task is to pay attention.

And then, with whatever courage we can gather, to take the next faithful step.

For Reflection

- Where in your life, leadership, or community are you being asked to see with new eyes?
- What are you trying to preserve that may no longer be able to carry life?
- What small sign of new life deserves more attention than it is currently receiving?
- What would it mean, in this season, to cooperate with grace rather than merely manage change?

More reflections will follow in the months ahead.

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