

staying connected

a publication designed for alumni of Catholic full-time volunteer programs
brought to you by the St. Vincent Pallotti Centers

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How to Make the Most of Your Life's Transitions

In the years following service, former volunteers experience many life changes. These major life events - from changing jobs, to living in a new city, to starting new relationships - can be especially challenging for "formers" who often struggle to incorporate their social justice, spirituality and community ideals into all aspects of life. These life changes present rich opportunities for growth.

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Making successful transitions is an invaluable skill all of us can develop. In this issue of *Staying Connected*, we present a basic framework for understanding transitions and suggest skills to help you make the most of them, whether in your career, relationships, spiritual life or other areas.

A first step to understanding transition is recognizing the **difference between change and transition**. William Bridges, a renowned transition expert, makes this important distinction: ***Change** occurs outside of us, e.g., starting a new job or a long time friend moving away. **Transition** is the internal adjustment we make as change occurs.* Each change we experience must be accompanied by a transition in how we think and feel about ourselves, others, our priorities and actions. Below, we present Bridges' ideas about the three phases of transition.

The Transition Process Typically Has Three Phases:

Letting Go

A transition begins when you acknowledge a loss and let go of a past identity.

To successfully transition, we need to deal adequately with endings, with their consequences, and with the risks of letting go.

What's at Risk:

Failure to let go could...

- ▶ Lead to a subsequent disabling, chronic or unexplainable sense of loss.
- ▶ Foster the development of unhealthy attachments, to living in the past.
- ▶ Delay consideration of new possibilities.

What's Possible:

Letting go...

- ▶ Allows us to better handle the grief caused by the loss / change.
- ▶ Helps us, following a loss, face the uncertainty of the Neutral Zone.
- ▶ Gives us a chance to grow in new ways.
- ▶ Allows us to more aptly consider the new possibilities in the Neutral Zone.

Neutral Zone

The time when

the old way is gone, but your new identity is not yet clear. **Marvelous growth is possible.**

This middle time is like floating between trapezes. We've let go of one trapeze and believe the second will arrive on time. But for now we have little to hold on to, except our own convictions and skills.

What's at Risk:

During this time...

- ▶ Old weaknesses can re-emerge.
- ▶ We can become stagnant in self-doubt.
- ▶ Instead of pursuing new possibilities productively, we may expend our energy simply coping.

What's Possible:

This is a time when...

- ▶ Through creativity, we can experience breakthroughs, rather than breakdowns.
- ▶ We can break out of the false belief that whatever is, is right.
- ▶ Discovery, innovation and personal enhancement are most possible.

New Beginning

This final phase starts when you commit to new values, attitudes, and a new identity.

The new beginning is when we have made the interior conversions and convincingly see ourselves in a new role, relationship or situation.

What's at Risk:

New beginnings can...

- ▶ Re-activate the old anxieties associated with the ending of the old way.
- ▶ Trigger memories of past failures and their associated loss of self-esteem.
- ▶ Frighten us because they call for a new commitment.

What's Possible:

We can experience...

- ▶ A strong sense of confidence that we know who we are.
- ▶ A celebration of having made a successful transition.
- ▶ A sense of well-being with where we are in our lives and where we are going.

Staying Connected: Assisting in the continued formation of former lay volunteers

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The St. Vincent Pallotti Center for Apostolic Development

Mission: To promote lay volunteer service that challenges laity, clergy, and religious to work together in the mission of the Church. Our goal is to support lay volunteers *before, during, and after* their term of service.

Local Pallotti Centers are in Boston, Paterson, NJ, St. Louis and Sacramento. The National Office is in Washington, DC.

The Centers take their inspiration from Saint Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850) who believed passionately in the laity, in each person as being an image of God and as called to be missionary.

Please let us know if you are moving or no longer wish to receive *Staying Connected*. Each re-addressed or returned issue costs us 50 - 80 cents which we could well use to serve you better. Thanks!

Making Sense of Your Personal Transitions

Ask Yourself: What are the main changes I am going through right now? (check out the life changes listed around the border - do any of these examples hit home for you?)

One Step Further: Where am I in the three-fold transition process? Still holding on to the past? Have I left the past but still don't have a clear destination? Have I just arrived at a new beginning?

Think it Through: Naming the changes you are going through and determining which transition phase you are in for each of them are important steps toward greater well being. Now consider using the suggestions below to help make your transitions times of cherished growth.

Suggestions for Letting Go:

- ~ Develop a clear picture of what is actually going to change.
- ~ *Be honest* about what you're really losing, including other losses obscured by the obvious loss.
- ~ *Let go* of the old identity.
- ~ *Allow* yourself time to grieve.
- ~ *Discern* ways to compensate for the loss.
- ~ *Define* clearly what's over and what's not.
- ~ *"Mark" or celebrate* the ending.
- ~ *Honor* the past, rather than denigrate it.
- ~ *Give* yourself a piece of the past to carry forward.
- ~ *Be open* to new understandings and values connected with the new beginning you are transitioning to.

Suggestions for the Neutral Zone:

- ~ Recognize that the journey from one identity to another is hard and it takes time.
- ~ *Expect* ambiguity and confusion.
- ~ *Resist* premature closure on a decision.
- ~ *Understand* that this is a time of enormous change that needs to be managed.
- ~ *Ask* questions, seek new solutions and new identities.
- ~ *Be creative*; explore new and unusual ways of getting something done. Use both sides of the brain; shift perspectives.
- ~ *Re-define / re-orient* yourself; use the uncertainties of the neutral zone as opportunities for creative growth.
- ~ *Give* yourself realistic, short-term objectives; keep track of good ideas.
- ~ *Embrace* setbacks and losses as entry points for new solutions.

Suggestions for a New Beginning:

- ~ Recognize that beginnings follow the timing of the mind and heart whereas a *start* follows the timing of a pre-set schedule.
- ~ *Stay Focussed*: keep in mind the purpose of your transition. Explain how the start of the external change is different from the beginning of your new identity.
- ~ *Give* yourself quick successes, even if small, for they are re-affirming.
- ~ *Create* a mental picture of the new beginning; use symbols of the new identity to reinforce it.
- ~ *Celebrate* the successful beginning at the end of a transition. Reward yourself for having accomplished the transition. Be playful!

Bottom Line: Remember, a transition is an interior development, like a spiritual journey, that can't be forced simply because of your own agenda or a company's timetable.

Suggested Activity: Describe and share with a friend where you are in the transition process, what you see as your personal challenges, and ways in which you want to grow. Take another look at the suggestions above. Describe specific ways you can use them to move toward being "at home" with your new beginning, identity and situation.

STARTING A NEW JOB MOVING TO A NEW CITY GETTING MARRIED GRADUATING MOVING BACK HOME TRAVELLING

BECOMING A PARENT COPING WITH A DEATH HAVING A SALARY GETTING OUT OF A RELATIONSHIP



THE PAGES & THE LINKS

~ references for open minds ~



Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change by William Bridges, provides a framework for understanding transitions. www.wmbridges.com contains articles, online tools and resources for personal and organization changes.

Praying our Goodbyes by Joyce Rupp, a personal guide through the letting go phase of transition, includes prayers for people experiencing loss.

Re-entry for Volunteer Missioners by Maureen Connors (call 800-543-5046 to order), is a rich guide for lay volunteers and missioners returning home.

Making All Things New: An Invitation to Spiritual Life by Henri Nouwen, an excellent introduction to spiritual life that challenges us to turn daily experiences into conversion experiences.

Breaking Up, Down, and Through: Discovering Spiritual and Psychological Opportunities in Your Transitions by Andre Papineau, discusses how periods of change are normal and offer wonderful growth opportunities.

Who Moved My Cheese? by Spencer Johnson, a parable containing pithy thoughts on dealing with the inevitability of change and transition in our lives. For more info on how people and organizations have used this story's lessons to deal with change, check out www.whomovedmycheese.com.

Journeys into Emptiness: Dogan, Merton, Jung and the Quest for Transformation by Robert Jingen Gunn, contains advice for achieving personal transcendence.

Our World in Transition by Diamuid O'Murchu, examines the profound change occurring in our understanding of creation and our place in it, and the impact these changes are having on diverse areas of life from medicine and physics to gender relations and religion.

For info and articles about making career transitions, surf to content.careers.msn.com/WorkingLife/Transitions/art_01.asp

For tips on transitions, check out "Coping with Change and Transition" at students.usiu.edu/counseling/Self-Help/PersonalSkills/Transition.htm.

Spirituality ~ the search for the discovery of God's transforming presence in our lives



Conversion as Transition

According to biblical scholars, the core of Jesus' message was the call to religious conversion. However, Jesus certainly intended it not to be simply a one-time event, as in deciding to follow Him rather than Moses or Mithras. Instead, Jesus called His disciples to a deeper conversion to become "other Christs," to act in His place, throughout our entire lives.

"Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians... [as] an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who... [is] at once holy and always in the need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal." Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1427-1429.

This conversion is a transition, or series of transitions, in which our understanding of God, Church, and self evolves. This life-long evolution clarifies our unique call to serve God.

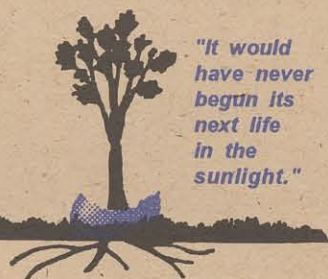
External change and the accompanying internal transitions are catalysts in the conversion process. An experience such as volunteer service or the loss of a close friend can result in shifts of consciousness, the surrendering of one's worldview and bringing one closer to God. This series of experiences and corresponding transitions can occur in an organic fashion, with each conversion experience merging into aspects of the next. Perhaps full-time volunteer service can be a conversion experience in and of itself, and can lead one to pursuing involvement in a social justice organization which results in further personal conversion.

Conversion requires a life-long willingness to examine one's external experience and incorporate that experience into new understanding. This religious conversion requires three phases: honest discernment of what is, exploration of what could be, followed by commitment to the new understandings, values, and way of life. These parallel the three phases of any transition, as described on pages one and two: letting go, tolerating the ambiguity of the neutral zone and finally, commitment to new beginning.

One way to promote this on-going conversion is daily prayer, solidly rooted in one's experiences. Try spending ten minutes each day with a prayerful examination of conscience. Begin by giving yourself a few minutes for quiet relaxation. Then, think back on your day, on interactions with others, issues within the community. Express gratitude for the ways you experienced God's love. Consider opportunities you had to respond to God's love. When were you successful? When did you miss opportunities?

Faith is the belief that God really is playing a creative role and is a transforming presence in our lives. This divine presence gives us the courage to let go, the thoughtfulness to endure confusion and the hope that new life will take root.

"... and had never suffered the uncertainty of the 'pre-rooting' period on the ground?"



FORMER VOLUNTEER SIGHTINGS IN... the Portland, OR & Seattle, WA areas

For this issue, we asked former volunteers in the Portland, OR & Seattle, WA areas about what's going on there for formers and to give us ideas to share!

Monthly Former volunteer gatherings:

- *Kindred Spirits* is a group which facilitates monthly gatherings for former volunteers in Portland - usually potlucks in homes on the 3rd Thursday of each month. For more information, contact Carol Gabrielli at 503-335-8202.
- Another way to get connected with other former volunteers in the area is by contacting the volunteer program that you served with. Ask them about the *Network of Former Volunteers* - a useful resource, coordinated by the St. Vincent Pallotti Center, for getting in touch with other formers anywhere in the U.S.!

Some parishes where "formers" attend:

- Portland:**
- St. Andrew's Parish at 806 NE Alberta St., 503-281-4429. Many formers and young people attend; strong community feeling and social justice ministry.
 - St. Francis of Assisi Parish at 330 SE 11th St., 503-232-5880. Great community feel and an emphasis on social justice ministry.
 - St. Ignatius Parish at 3400 SE 43rd Ave., 503-777-1491.
 - St. Vincent DePaul Parish - The Downtown Chapel at 601 Burnside, 503-228-0746. A small parish with a wide variety of parishioners.
- Seattle:**
- Our Lady of the Lake Parish, 206-522-2840. Contact Laurie Suppinger. Strong junior & senior high & young adult ministries.
 - St. Benedict Parish, 206-623-6140. Weekly young adult ministry meetings. Contact Joe Chernowski at JoeC@StBens.net
 - St. Ignatius Chapel at Seattle U. at 900 Broadway, 206-296-6000.
 - St. Joseph Parish at 732 18th Ave. East, 206-324-2522.
 - St. Leo Parish at 212 N. 4th St., 509-248-1911.
 - St. Therese Parish at 3416 Marion St., 206-325-2711. Active young adult ministry: offers retreats, volunteer opp's & social events.

Retreat opportunities:

- Contact Karen Mertens at 503-283-8053 or hca@up.edu. She is interested in facilitating retreats for former volunteers in the area.
- The Jesuit Volunteer NW Office in Seattle organizes one or two retreats each year - open to ALL formers. Next retreat: April 6-8, 2001 at Nestucca Sanctuary on the Oregon coast. Contact Carol at 503-335-8202 or jvcnw@jesuitvolunteers.org.

Peace and Justice organizations in the area:

- Portland Archdiocese Office of Justice and Peace at 2838 E. Burnside, 503-233-8361, provides good resources for activities, retreats & lectures. Contact Frank Fromhertz (Director).
- Archdiocese of Seattle Justice and Peace Office at 910 Marion St., 206-382-4869 or 800-348-9092. Ask for the young adult ministry coordinator.
- Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center, 1216 NE 65th St. in Seattle, 206-223-1138. Contact Joe Hastings.

Volunteer Opportunities:

- U. of Portland Office of Volunteer Services, 503-943-7132, offers service opp's, lectures and workshops. Contact Tom or Celine.

Other valuable resources:

- Portland Catholic Worker House at 2434 N. Farragut, 503-283-4349, offers liturgies, lectures, discussion and prayer groups.
- Journey Catholic Community, SW 13th & Clay St, 503-323-2406.
- Koinonia Catholic Community, 503-699-0473.
- WA State Catholic Conference, 206-301-0556.
- Seattle U.'s Campus Ministry, 206-296-6075. Check out SALT!

We are grateful to everyone who contributed information to this section. Thanks for helping us support other former volunteers!

Next Issue: Former Volunteer Sightings in the... Washington, DC & Baltimore, MD areas

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Tell Your Story... Help Others Grow

Often, the world's greatest stories feature an ordinary and unsuspecting person who undertakes an adventuresome journey and is transformed along the way. Starting with the first ancient Greek classics, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (750 bc), they tell of General Ulysses' siege of Troy and his struggle to return home. The Hebrew books of *Genesis* and *Exodus* (600 bc) tell of humanity's expulsion from paradise, struggle with slavery in Egypt and ultimate return to the paradise of Jerusalem, the promised land.

Similarly, Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1321) describes the physical and allegorical journey from hell, through purgatory and into paradise. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1390), John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1745), Frank Baum's *Wizard of Oz* (1900), Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1910), all describe a transition from a main character's initial innocence, to an encounter with life's dark side, and finally to a happy resolution. Most of these journey's can readily be seen as symbols of a spiritual transformation.

What makes these stories classics is that the journeys hold up a mirror for the readers, who intuitively know the journeys are about their own lives - their own journeys and transitions. There is a power in journey stories, including in the stories which former volunteers and missionaries tell about their effort to serve in another culture, whether across the world or across town. Listening to such stories is not only fun, but also helps others be reflective about and take a measure of their own lives. These are valuable keys for helping others grow.

Imagine if the Wizard of Oz abruptly ended with Dorothy clicking her ruby slippers, waking up in her bed, and then Dorothy giving us no further reflections on her story. To the contrary, in telling her story, Dorothy recalled the people who touched her during the journey. She let go of her old identity and welcomed her family with renewed love and appreciation. By sharing her story with millions of readers and movie viewers, she helps us understand that each person is on a journey, that each of us changes, matures, and has the potential to touch others by sharing *our* story.



We Want to Hear from YOU for Our Next Issue of *Staying Connected*!

Money: An Owner's Guide for Former Volunteers... "A penny earned... is a guilty penny."
Tips for dealing with 'having a salary' guilt, socially conscious investing, consumerism and much more!
Please contact us with your insights, ideas and resources!



Washington, DC & Baltimore, MD: former volunteer sightings --
What's happening inside our nation's two most popular beltways? Let us know where formers are gathering, going to church and attending other events!

Pallotti01@aol.com or call toll-free: 1-877-VOL-LINK

