

## Talking points of Mrs. Marg van Herk-Paradis (Credence and Co. consultant)

### TED TALK # 5

***Resilience as a capacity for bouncing back.*** *In the face of crisis and loss, resilience is not just endurance but rather a call to leave our comfort zone while recognizing our vulnerabilities. Resilience is a journey, not a result or a goal. We must recognize the process (stages) of becoming resilient as a life-giving process. The history of consecrated life has demonstrated many examples of resilience.*

Hello. My name is Marg Van Herk-Paradis. I am a vowed lay Marianist and am President and Co-founder of Credence & Co.

Today, I want to share with you some stories of rediscovering God's presence in the world. To begin, I believe there are three things of which we can be assured of as it relates to God's presence.

1. First, God's love and grace are assured. In our everyday lives there will always be moments of awe and wonder. These moments remind us to pay attention, to notice, and to be grateful.
2. Second, pain and suffering are part of the process. In life, we all will encounter moments of loss, sorrow, brokenness, and grief. These moments, while vulnerable, can call us out of our comfort zone and call us towards the act of surrender.
3. Third, God consistently reaches out to us, like a hand that reaches out and seeks to draw us back into life. These moments make us resilient as it requires a commitment to the journey.

The manifestation of God's presence is forever changing and within this manifestation we will experience moments of wonder and awe, suffering and surrender, and transformation.

In my work as a congregational health consultant, I come alongside congregations often at the stage of suffering when people and systems are not functioning at their best. If you are familiar with the congregational life cycle, the stage of suffering is at a time in the life of the congregation when there can be a protectiveness to what is being lived, a sense of crisis and confusion which creates significant conflict, and often not enough people to carry out the various ministry programs which can result in closure.

Our work, like that of a medical practitioner is to listen to the symptoms described by the congregants in order to better understand what is happening, to try and diagnose the problem, and then provide recommendations for ways to navigate the challenge that is being experienced.

In this work what is most intriguing is not the diagnosis but how congregations engage this stage of life. As they grapple with what to do next, there are three choices that emerge: to die protecting what they have, to die a meaningful death, or to surrender by releasing that which they are attached to by opening up their mind, heart, and will.

Most churches are surprised by the choices. The choices become a wakeup call to either remain in the muck of suffering, or to choose surrender which offers the following:

1. It opens up our mind to see the current reality as fully as possible. Seeing all that is good AND all that is challenging.

2. It opens up our heart to engage in conversations that matter, to dialogue, and to listen with humility to one another.
3. And finally, it can open up our will to be. To act ourselves into surrender rather than to think ourselves into surrender.

In my experience, congregations that choose surrender refocus their prayer life, recommit to listening for God and rediscover their calling and purpose. As they settle into this new way of being, we begin to see the movement of the spirit as they move from the “how” they do ministry to the “why” they do ministry which is more missional focused.

We are in a time of significant change: changing social norms, environmental distress, the ending of a pandemic, economic disparities, and war. We are experiencing epidemic loneliness, a significant loss of empathy, mental health distress and despair, a distrust in institutions including the institutional church and rates of hatred that we haven't seen in many decades.

The implications for those of us in the church is that we need to understand the longing of our time and read the signs of the times. A longing that is bigger than the individual. A longing that is related to meaning, purpose and belonging. A longing that that needs to provide refuge and safety in order to thrive.

We are a people of hope, we believe in the resurrection. But we cannot get to Easter Sunday without going through Good Friday. A spirituality of transformation moves us from moments of awe and wonder, to moments of suffering that give us opportunities to practice the act of surrender. It is only through surrender that we can transform.

A spirituality of transformation needs resilience in order to renew itself. Renewal does not happen without change; change can create unease: this is where we are invited to offer the hand of grace to others including ourselves and to provide care for one another.

I would like to leave you with a reading from Jeremiah 29: 11-13:

For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me, if you seek me with all your heart,”

I invite you to reflect now on the following questions:

1. As you reflect on the spirituality of transformation, which moment is your congregation in?
2. What choices are in front of you at this time?
3. What do you need to surrender in order to transform?
4. Where will your resilience come from?