

## Transformed by Showing Up

It is said that “80 percent of life is just showing up.” This well-known quote, often attributed to actor and director Woody Allen, indicates the importance of **presence**~ in life. And it makes sense. After all, you can’t get ahead, if you aren’t there to receive and deal with life as it is happening. In times of crisis, a friend’s simple presence is often worth the most.

I remember as a pre-teen and then later in teen years, scanning various gatherings to see if my dad were there among other parents as I received recognition as a Boy Scout or as a soloist in a high school choir performance. Dad’s presence mattered! Showing up matters!

Among the greatest regrets I hold is of **not**~ showing up when needed – as a parent, a spouse, or a friend on those occasions where truly needed. In turn, among my greatest satisfactions **is having** shown up when that mattered. After some years of experience, I’m better at anticipating where I need to show up.

I especially need to show up in the places that demand my embodying the values, beliefs, and commitments I profess to hold. Places where there is pain, anger, hurt, suffering in body or spirit. Places where there is bewilderment, confusion, and loneliness. Placing myself in that space, my presence says, “I’m here both in word and deed, here in mind and body. Quietly present. Listening. Giving support. Here~, ready~ as needed.

Our giving everything toward the **goal**~ we seek, is what Paul means by giving ourselves as a *living sacrifice*. A sacrifice is something given at a cost and is total – given without reserve!

For Paul, our **presence**~ is not some sacrifice that ends in death, but, rather, is a consecration or dedication to the will and work of God that is *life-giving*. It marks renewal and wholeness. The word “sacrifice” is said in many of our communion prayers as a sign that we wish to be made **new** by God – dying to self, reborn in the love of God. And so, we present ourselves, freely and openly, trusting that when we show up, **God does too!**

For Paul, there is more to *embodied faith* than just physical presence. Embodied faith also involves an opening of the mind. To be our most faithful selves, we need to wrap our minds around things in **new**~ ways, ways that push and challenge us to better examine ourselves, our understandings, certainties, and moral absolutes, to examine our communities, our nation, and even our world. We must do **more**~ than just show up. We have to **think**, too – to think about **how**~ we are showing up. It is easy to fall into the trap of just going through the motions without really engaging our minds and hearts.

With our hearts we show up as caring people, listening, and nurturing as needed We show up without judgment. We show up as sensitive and emotionally responsive.

The renewing of our minds is about *good*~ thinking – critical thinking. Good thinking is a prerequisite for sober judgment. It is also a sign of faithfulness. We are faithful, when like Jesus, we **question**~ the underlying assumptions, beliefs,

values, and worldviews that regulate our lives. ...Are our lives being regulated by the worldview, beliefs, values of the **best** understandings and wisdom from our faith tradition that lead us toward justice and loving our neighbor?

Being faithful is looking behind~ the “letters” of our tradition to its **spirit**. Not putting a *period* where there needs to be a *comma* – understanding that God speaks to us in a different historical period than that of our ancestors.

Through his letter, Paul appeals to us – implores us – to take on the mindset of Christ – dedicating our whole life, our whole self – head, heart, and bankbook – as a daily spiritual offering to God. In this way, not worshipping idols but worshipping God in spirit and truth!

Paul **tells**~ us what is required to live as a spiritual offering, a living sacrifice. We are to think with sober judgment, measuring the ways we evaluate our self-worth in respect to the worth of others, measuring with moderation – not over-estimating or under-estimating ourselves or others. We are to recognize the unique gifts of each person and recognize the ways these gifts serve the wellbeing of our community as a whole. We are to center ourselves **in**~ community – giving ourselves to each other, using our talents, gifts, and resources for each other.

Consciously recalling the teachings and life of Jesus as we examine our values and actions, **opens**~ to transformation. Our goal in this process is to center Jesus as the governing force in our lives, allowing nothing else to have center.

Within the process of re-centering and transforming, we become more able to bear witness to Jesus—**active** in the world. The beginning point starts with our honest and humble admission that we are **prone**~ to conforming to the world’s standards and hierarchies through our *going-with-the-flow*, our inaction, and our silence. ...We then consider the impact of that conforming. We look critically at our society and its impact on us. We look at such societal norms and values as greed, identity divisiveness and animosity, and individualism unconcerned~ with the wellbeing of others and creation, and the ways these norms and values contribute to the escalation of disharmony and discord within society. **We open our eyes to see and evaluate.**

Jesus-oriented witnessing shall require letting go of value systems and social arrangements ordered by hierarchy – embracing, instead, a value system that honors diversity, inclusion, acceptance of people on their own terms, without insisting on cultural conformity, without erasing others’ cultural or personal distinctiveness, uniqueness, and particularity.

Some years ago, in 2008 through 2009, as chaplain, I ministered at the Catholic Charities Listening House in St Paul – a gathering space for men and women experiencing hard times, a welcoming space where they could find food, conversation, counseling, board-games, reading, a mailbox, ...showers. ...One evening, I was approached by a man who asked me, “How can I be transformed?”

I was profoundly shaken, even troubled, by this question! ...“How can I be transformed?” He **sought**~ transformation! I

wondered..., how deeply do **I** seek transformation. Baptism and confirmation called me to transformation, communion continually invites me to ongoing transformation, but am I consciously *seeking*~ to be transformed?

Where do **I**, Okogyeamon, need to be transformed? What does transformation require~ of me? Am I willing to pay the price of transformation? Am I willing to be a living sacrifice – to live according to what I profess to be right and true? How does that show up in the way I do politics, relate to family, seek to know and to respond to the needs of others? How does that show up in self-regulation of the “shadow-side” of my personality? In the consciously, intentionally reigning in dispositions toward judgment of others, and dispositions toward rage, lust, covetousness?

Human appetites are natural~ to our human beingness, required for our survival. They are instinctive. But we choose not to be **dominated** by instinctive drives.

The sacrifice here is that I *will*~ to monitor myself, critique and correct myself, determine to do better, and also forgive myself when I falter. It is **I** who seek to follow Jesus – I a perfectly, **imperfect** human being. *So*~, for me. Perhaps so, for some of you.

The Good News is that God **does**~ help us, God **does**~ provide a way to be changed from the inside out. Let us be open to God’s working in our lives to bring transformation. May we not be conformed to the world; but, rather, may we seek to live through the values of Jesus, conformed to Jesus, transformed by the life and teachings of Jesus. **Amen!**