

## **“Echoes of the Heart”**

Reflections on Life and Community Living

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**Change is all the rage.** If there were ever a buzz word for *election 2008*, it would be *change*. Not that this is an uncommon notion for politicians to trumpet—particularly if their party is out of power—but still, *change* is indeed all the rage in *election 2008*.

As Miami Herald columnist, Dave Barry commented on January 9<sup>th</sup>, *The voters of New Hampshire have made their decision and the big winner is change. Here's the final vote tally: change—43 percent, hope—28 percent, hope for change—17 percent, hair—9 percent, experience—2 percent etc.*

Given our President's consistent low standing in national polls, a call for change is certainly not surprising. The larger question, however, is what does it mean? Who and what needs to be changed?

Generally, politicians calling for change mean the *status quo* needs to change. In other words: the current administration, along with its ideology, way of governing, priorities, its ability to enact legislation and provide direction the voters want, and on and on.

**The inevitability of change.** Change is, of course, nothing new to any of us. We may resist it, even going to considerable ends to avoid it, but *change*, ultimately, will have the last word. We're always in the grip of one transition or another. Along with the ongoing unfolding of the universe, as the days march on and the years pile up, change is *the way of things*.

Now, this change may be good. It may be just what we need. With the New Year upon us, many of us have *resolved* to make any number of changes in the year ahead. To be sure, we make resolutions because we're not content with *more of the same*.

None of this is unusual, of course, because there's a tendency in any of us to *fall into a rut*. Easily, almost without noticing, we get locked into routines and *patterns of existence* that don't feed our spirit and keep us *alive* to the promises of life's potential blessings.

Are you in a rut? Are there things about your life you'd like to *change* in 2008?

**Change and religious faith.** Although the Church is notoriously resistant to change in some areas, a glaring paradox persists; because, in fact, change in the Church is everywhere.

Indeed, the life of the faith community revolves around a litany of ceremonial transitions, or *times of change*. At our baptism, confirmation (of the baptism), marriage and then funeral, the Church is there to offer God's blessing and love. Again, *change* is everywhere.

For practicing Christians, *change* lies at the heart of the gospel message. The implicit assumption in our religious/spiritual journey is that we all need to be changed. This is another way of noting that none of us is perfect, we all fall short of the glory of God, and at the end of the day, we all need to be forgiven and renewed.

The gospel is actually very straight forward about this. Our common problem (or limitation) is that we seldom think it applies to us. As practicing religious people, easily, there's a tendency to become too full of ourselves. We hear the words of forgiveness and renewal all the time but, as the years unfold, increasingly, we're convinced the words apply to someone else.

Well, truth is, they may. But they also apply to us, to you and me. If we *take the high road* on this, this can be a good thing.

Why? Because—*voila!*—don't we all need a *wake-up* call now and then? Don't we all need to be reminded that God has a fresh word for each of us every day, and that *that* fresh word might well be able to take us to a new place, a place we need to go?

As 2008 breaks upon us, let change come and let it take us to places—as individuals and as a nation—that honors and reflects God's abiding purposes.