Opinion
Spirituality



(Unsplash/Priscilla Du Preez)



by Christian Mocek

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

June 6, 2019

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

I recently had a brief but meaningful conversation with an old friend. We had not talked for months and even now we could only find a few minutes to sit down and chat. We caught up on new jobs and showed each other around our homes. Both young adults, we had a number of new things happening in our lives.

I have many friends who are going through "transitions," whether that be into priesthood, parenthood, married life, full-time employment, life in new cities, or new lives back in the same city. With all that transition comes a sense of uncertainty. Did I make the right decision in moving away? In moving back? Am I on the right path?

I have no doubt that most people go through this stage in their life. Most likely, we go through multiple transitions — at the beginning of adulthood, when the kids move out and head to college, when we retire, or when we lose someone close to us or face another unforeseen circumstance. Each transition hopefully makes us more able to face the next.

There is no doubt that most of the time during our life journey of transitions, a few encouraging words goes a long way. But, how often do we look at someone who is having difficulty with something new or unforeseen and say, "I have been there," then share that often-maligned-yet-all-too-common unsolicited advice about how to get through it?

I do it, and we all do from time to time. We especially like to respond this way with people who are closest to us. We already know them and have spent hours working hard to support them. Our advice, then, should be considered and graciously received.

Is there a way, especially with those who are closest to us, to change "I have been there" to "I am with you now"? We all face transitions and new circumstances that challenge who we are and what we want to become. Sometimes these shake us badly and we find ourselves diving into the sort of depth that forms character, builds or breaks relationships, and gives perspective that forms our future choices.

One of my favorite saints, St. Francis de Sales, in one of his writings, shares an encouraging image of a God who holds us by the hand, matching his steps to ours and happy to walk at the pace we set. Perhaps to all of us who have been through it and to those of us who are going through it now, this image is one to encourage us

on the journey. In those moments where we are tempted to say "I have been there," it reminds us that God always says, "I am with you now."

[Christian Mocek is the director of annual giving at St. Meinrad, a Benedictine monastery, seminary and school of theology. He lives in New Albany, Indiana, with his wife and one son.]

Advertisement