Spirituality
Soul Seeing



Maxwell Kuzma films an educational documentary about Jesus in January 2019. He is holding a film camera while riding in a wooden boat on the Sea of Galilee in Israel. (Courtesy of Maxwell Kuzma)



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The transgender spiritual journey is a process of "soul seeing" — discerning what is invisible to the eye yet profoundly real. For transgender people, this means uncovering the authentic self beneath layers of societal expectations and discovering deeper truths about who we are and how we are seen. In my own journey, this practice of seeing has not only led me to find happiness and well-being for the first time in my life, but also led me to a more intimate relationship with God than I ever had before.

Prior to transitioning, I spent many years living in the shadows of superficiality. I made friends and participated in professional and religious social events, but I always knew something was wrong. I never felt like I could truly be myself with other people, and ended up drifting away from friends as their lives progressed. I couldn't go deeper with them because I wasn't allowing myself to go deeper into my own soul.

The tipping point came one day as I sat in my office, a video editing suite where I displayed awards and photos from my career. As my eyes traveled over each accomplishment, gold framed and under glass panes, I remembered the hard work I put into each success. But instead of feeling proud, I felt the familiar gnawing ache that it wasn't enough. No earthly success would ever be enough. I would never feel whole until I looked deeper into my soul and acknowledged the truth of what I had spent almost three decades avoiding: I am a transgender man.

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My eyes were drawn to a photo from Israel in January 2019, where I was filming on location for an educational documentary about Jesus. In the photo, I'm holding a film camera while riding in a wooden boat on the Sea of Galilee. The Gospel story of

Jesus walking on water immediately came to mind. In the storm of my inner life, would I be able to heed Jesus' call to not be afraid? Would I be able to step out into the storm to not only meet Christ, but to come to know myself in a deeper and more true way?

That was my first moment of "soul seeing," when I finally saw the truth about my authentic self. This moment of discovery was so profound that it moved me to make a radical change in my life and take a risk: to start on the path of transition, even though I knew it would result in the loss of support from most people in my life and lead to possible other challenges and dangers in public and political life.

But the commitment I made that night allowed me to finally access genuine discernment of God's will, and granted me other spiritual graces too. This spiritual clarity, the ability to see the authentic self, extends beyond just the mind or soul — it manifests physically, too. One of the greatest gifts of the transgender journey is the gift of embodiment: the experience of truly inhabiting one's body, seeing it as an expression of the soul's deepest truth and a beautiful gift from God.

The journey of spiritual transition is a journey of many small miracles: hearing a chosen name and pronouns from a loved one; beholding oneself in new clothes or a fresh haircut; observing the steady gradual changes that unfold over time through hormone therapy. One day, you're in front of the mirror and the invisible has been rendered visible. Each small miracle is a step toward a larger, sacred transformation.

Good theology makes the analogy that transgender bodies call to mind the wonder of Christ's resurrected body, so often depicted as warmly aglow with divine, life-giving light that overflows to everyone it touches and draws people in.

The gift of embodiment is not just a physical transformation, but a visible presence of the soul truly at home in the body, at peace for the first time. I have witnessed this homecoming to the body within myself, but also in countless transgender people I have known as we participate in the love of the divine. This transition calls us out of the tomb and into new life: "Lazarus, arise."

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I see myself reflected in the Gospel characters who are living in the margins or shadows, the people Jesus is drawn to, and whom he draws to himself. And through this experience of seeing like Jesus, I experience the unfolding beauty of all those marginalized or maligned by society. Looking with Jesus' eyes has allowed me a more profound appreciation of humanity.

As I continue to navigate the challenges of living as a transgender person in a world that often seeks to erase my visibility, I hold tight to the spiritual gifts that accompany transition: the gift of seeing beyond appearances, the gift of a body made whole and the gift of living authentically in the light of divine love. These gifts, bestowed on generations of transgender people before me, inspire me to continue stepping forward with courage and to encourage others to do the same.

Our journeys of transformation, though unique, are part of a larger story — a story where each of us is invited to see the invisible, embrace the sacred and step into the fullness of who we are meant to be in the eyes of God. To step out and "be not afraid." This is not just a journey for some, but for all: a journey into the light of authenticity, love and divine grace.