

Spiritual Practices for the Grief of Transitions:



Living Through Transition as Paschal Mystery

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Awaken me, Lord, to your light.
Open my eyes to your presence.

Awaken me, Lord, to your love.
Open my heart to your indwelling.

Awaken me, Lord, to your life.
Open my mind to your abiding.

Awaken me, Lord, to your purpose.
Open my will to your guiding.



- How are we attending to the grief and complex emotions and experiences of our transitions?
- What supports our capacity to craft meaning and move deeper into our life with God in unsettling transitions?
- What can we draw on from our Christian spiritual tradition and practices that enables honest engagement with our reality while opening us to new possibilities for life and wholeness?



- Transition - the process, or period, of changing from one state or condition to another
- Change involves loss and grief
- Disenfranchised grief - not openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported
(Doka 2002)
- Transitions as Liminal Space
- Liminality's "disorientation, discomfort and destabilising of the settled order" is what enables new experiences, new understandings and the emergence of new ways of being
(Wieland 2015, 71)

The Dual Processing Model of Grief



Stroebe, M.S. & Schut, H.A.W. (1999).
Selby et. al. (2011) adapted to re-entry loss



- 1. Good Friday** “the loss of life –death”
- 2. Easter Sunday** “the reception of new life”
- 3. The Forty Days** “a time for readjustment to the new and for grieving the old”
- 4. Ascension** “letting go of the old and letting it bless you, the refusal to cling”
- 5. Pentecost** “the reception of the new spirit for the new life that one is already living”.

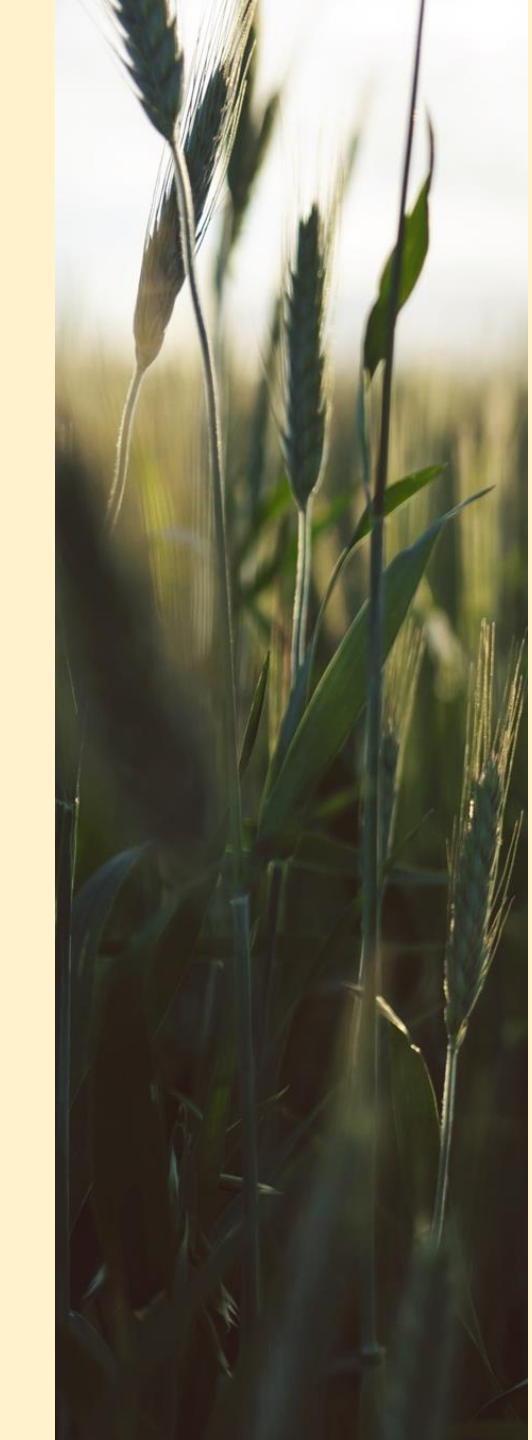
(Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*, 1999)



In practice this means:

1. "Name your deaths"
2. "Claim your births"
3. "Grieve what you have lost and adjust to the new reality"
4. "Do not cling to the old, let it ascend and give you its blessing"
5. "Accept the spirit of the life that you are in fact living"

(Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*, 1999)



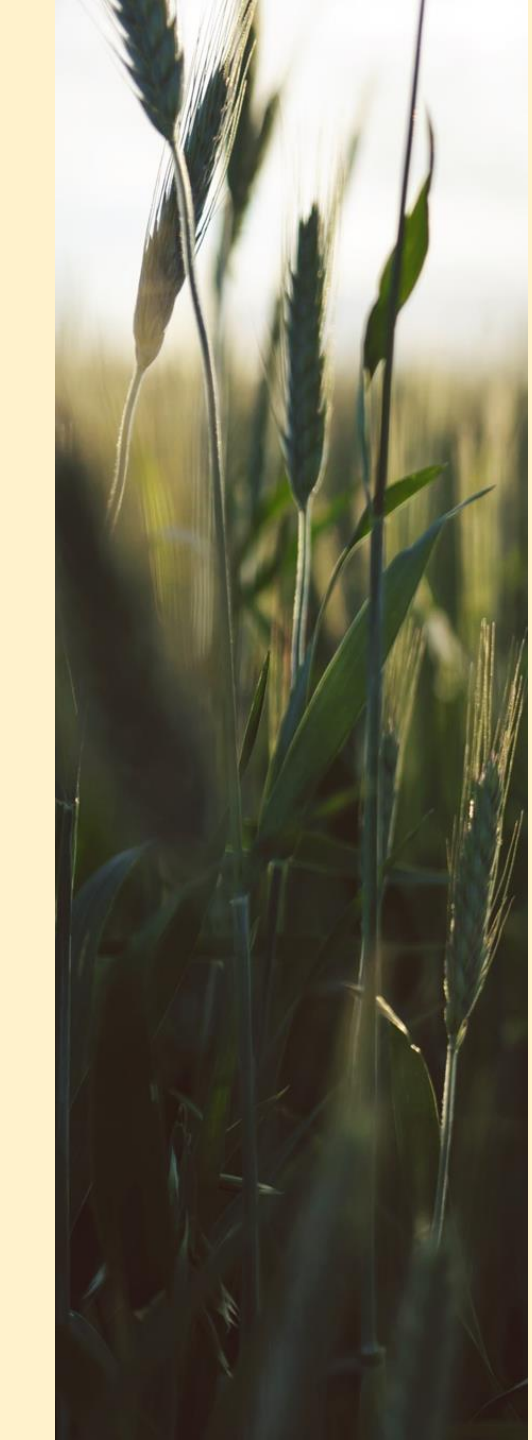
The **Paschal Mystery** is the mystery of how our lives are transformed in union with Christ.

After undergoing some kind of death, we can receive new life and a new spirit.

Paschal death is a death that, while ending a kind of life, opens the person undergoing it to receive a deeper and richer form of life.

(Rolheiser, 1999)

The Paschal Mystery cycle involves entering into the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ within our own lives. **It invites us to experience Jesus' story and our story as intimately intertwined.**



An invitation to encounter with Jesus and the disciples
in the post resurrection 40 days.

Reflections on John 20 and 21

Jesus meets Mary in her grief, Thomas in his doubts
and Peter in his shame.

We are in good company. Jesus meets us tenderly in
our liminal times of confusion, disorientation and loss.

Stay present for the journey, gently opening your
hands and your heart. In time may we let what was
reveal its blessing as we wait in trust for the gift of
what is to come.



Spiritual practices

- Spiritual companionship
- Lament
- Creative expression
- Prayers of the saints
- Deeper listening
- Connection to beauty
- Open to surrender

Resources



- Lectio 365 App - morning and evening prayer
- Prayer of examen <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/how-can-i-pray/>
- Welcoming prayer <https://crossministrygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/R-Group-Process-Welcoming-Prayer.pdf>
- Write your own lament
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6005b5c76f0b7e66aaa6d96d/t/607893cdeb5e8b33c48dff3b/1618514895484/HowToLament_Screen_FNL.pdf
- Spiritual direction <https://www.iheart.com/podcast/256-regent-college-podcast-31041048/episode/041-spiritual-direction-with-susan-phillips-36081149/>
- Retreat <https://www.amazon.com.au/Invitation-Retreat-Ruth-Barton/dp/0830846468>

Reflection 1 – Name your deaths

Where in your story of this period of transition do you notice ‘deaths’ big or small?

What has been lost? (e.g. what has died in relation to your dreams and plans, relationships, health, idea of God, view of yourself or others, unmet expectations)

Sometimes these deaths are expected, other times they take us by surprise, what has it been like for you?



*"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies,
it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*

John 12:24



Reflection 2 – Claim your births

Where do you see new life in your circumstances?

What new forms of life are emerging in you?

What do you see God birthing in you?

*“See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.”*

Isaiah 43:19



Reflection 3

Grieve what you have lost and adjust to the new reality

How do you still need to grieve what you have lost?

What emotions come when you think about your losses?

What role might honest lament play for you? (Try praying with Biblical laments e.g. Psalms 6, 22, 142, Lamentations 3:46-57, or write your own)

How can you acknowledge and honour those losses ?

What are you noticing in your life that indicates adjusting to a new way of being?

How has adjusting been for you?

What would help you at this time to be open to your new reality?

*"How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?"*

Psalm 13:2



Reflection 4

Do not cling to the old, let it ascend and give you its blessing



What can you release into God's hands at this point?

How can the experiences you have had, both the positive and the difficult ones, be a gift for the next stage of your life?



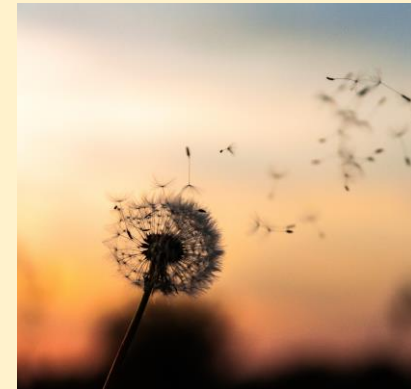
Reflection 5

Accept the spirit of the life that you are in fact living

What gift do you want to ask for to enable you to live well in your current reality?

Where are you being invited to experience more life and freedom?

How might you be more aware of God's presence in your life now?





References

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