

## Wednesday Church Epistle

### February 3, 2021

#### Trans-formed

By Rev. Sue D'Alessio

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Romans 12:2)

How very often, I have found myself stuck in being “conformed” (definition: comply with rules; or behave according to socially acceptable conventions or standards). I was raised to be a “good girl.” Following rules and conforming to what others expect was ingrained into me. One of my mother’s mantras was, “What will the neighbors think?” I constantly struggled to fit in, to be what others expected of me. Yet, I never felt like I fit in. I always felt like the different one.

When I discovered this verse as I read through the Bible as an eighth-grader, it stopped me. I read it and read it again. While I wanted to be good and acceptable and perfect, this passage implied that “conforming” was not the pathway, but rather, being transformed by the renewing of my mind – and discerning God’s will – was the path of faith. That took me on a journey of gathering knowledge and information by questioning, exploring, and learning. I wanted to know. I wanted to understand. I wanted to be in-formed. I studied and pestered people to learn as much as I could. Yet I still didn’t feel like I was good or acceptable or perfect (enough).

Then I was in a class with Dr. Robert Kegan who taught about the difference between being in-formed and trans-formed. He said that all-too-often, we try to fill our minds (to overflowing) with in-formation. However, in-formation doesn’t answer the questions we ask or give our lives the meaning which we seek. That, he said, takes “trans-formation” which means we are invited to change our perspective, to see life or a person or a situation from a new angle, which expands our capacity to understand and comprehend our world. It’s not until we step outside our preferred perspective or “comfort zone” that we can discover who we really are created to be. Suddenly this scripture passage leapt into my awareness again. I understood it in an entirely new way.

To trans-form, I needed to listen to the perspectives of others so deeply that I could see the world through their experience. I may not agree with them, but by seeing through their eyes (and hearts and minds), I expanded my capacity to be compassionate and see them maybe even as God would see them. To trans-form, I needed to ask questions, not merely to understand, but rather so I might be changed by circumstances or other people, so that I could experience those perspectives of the world that are so different from mine.

That started me on an entirely different relationship with my own life, the lives of those around me, and whatever circumstances I was living in. Instead of seeking to be accepted or to be seen by others as good or trying to be perfect, I began to seek to discover God's perspective in each encounter (when I remembered to do this). I realized finally that it is God's will (not mine) which is good and acceptable and perfect. All I needed to do was seek to discern God's presence/will and allow that process of discernment to "renew my mind," to open my mind and heart and spirit into the energy of God's Spirit.

I still catch myself trying to conform. I still love to learn more information. *And* I have added to my faith experience by allowing God's will to enliven and inspire me in order to live as Jesus taught by seeking to discern God's truth and love in each person and in each situation, to allow God to renew my mind (heart, spirit), to help me see the world in a different way and be transformed by the great goodness of God's grace and hope and love.

This is my story of trans-formation (still in process). This is the story for all of us. God continually moves and breathes into us renewing energy and life. God continually invites us to trans-formation by learning to listen, care and see from the perspectives of others. God continually calls us, day by day, moment by moment, to follow Jesus Christ into service and compassion and healing life.

**Gracious God, thank you for all the ways you speak to us. Help us to be open to your transformational Spirit as we seek to discern your will as your people of faith. Guide us as we learn to understand and treat each other as Jesus taught and lived. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.**