

Over the last few weeks, I have had terrible trouble doing business on the internet. I have not been able to listen to the ABC on line, because they have 'upgraded' their site and the 'link' I did have, now has to be upgraded also. The Tax department has changed its systems, so now I have to re-enter information to 'improve the security' of my connection. The Macquarie Bank has 'upgraded' its systems so that I had to spend an hour on the phone talking to them about how to get my browser to work with the new system!

My computer keeps telling me about the 'upgrades' that are available. Last Saturday I decided that 'Yes, I will upgrade' until I saw the size of the download, and the fact that it would take 'About 11 hours' to finish!

I have developed a new law. Instead of 'Work expands to fill the time available' the Dalzo Law is 'Changes to web sites multiply at the rate of the number of IT people employed to fiddle with them!'

Dealing with such a rate of change, even for daily tasks is not easy. How can I think about the meaning of life, the universe and everything when most of my time is spent adjusting to the changes made by other people, who don't tell me what they're doing!

I am not against change. I am not against technology either. But I do not like the *amount* of it that I am exposed to by people who are paid to fiddle with things at the other end.

Then I remember the prayer 'Be present, merciful God, and protect us through the hours of this night that we who are wearied by the changes

and chances of this fleeting world, may rest upon your eternal changelessness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

This prayer immediately put me in mind of when I was working in Geelong as a locum. I had taken over from another locum, and there were some changes going on at the Church. The 'communion minister' was a woman, who was doing what our communion ministers do - laying the table. A man, who was opposed to any women in the sanctuary button holed me and said 'I thought God was Changeless! Remember the prayer! we 'rest on his eternal changelessness'.

I replied 'God's changelessness does not rest in the fact that nothing will change. But that God's changelessness is in God's faithfulness and love toward us.' As the hymn 'Be still my soul' goes 'Through every change, he faithful will remain'.

I do not think that we can expect that God will stop the fact of change. It is the baptismal process of 'dying, entombment and rising,' a process that embodies change at its centre which gives us the promise of new life in Christ. So complaining about change, or resisting it, in a way resists the inner workings of God and nature too for that matter.

On the other hand, some changes are not of the kind that are amenable to 'human' life. Soon we will be celebrating the 'eight hour day'. (What had now become 'Moomba'). That came about because the workers who were being exploited said 'No!', 'We want a fair division of our time. We will work for eight hours, we want eight hours sleep, and eight hours for recreation'. This came about at a time when capitalism was on the rise. Unionism rose to counter

these exploitations and to introduce a more 'human' work regime. Looking at the casualisation of the workforce, and the extreme hours that young professionals are expected to work these days, I can see the time coming when some of these changes will be resisted by them, and we will have another 'eight hour day' movement. Some change is inhuman. Some change reflects the nature of God and of life as created by God. Negotiating our way through these changes is not easy.

My experience with the web sites combined with some research that I read might give a clue as to a creative response to this problem. I read that the most stressed public servants in England were the 'middle managers'. This was because at the lower levels of the public service, the jobs were routine, and the people who worked there were not really 'invested' in them. They worked to earn money and their 'lives' were not in work. (They are the kind who can sit behind a desk and say 'Computer says 'No' " without worrying about *you* on the other side of the desk). The other group of un-stressed people was the top managers. They were the ones who had lots of discretion over their time, could take long lunches, in the knowledge that they would be working weekends and so on. They were the ones who together with the ministers were *developing* policy. They had an ownership over the creation of new initiatives, and the direction of the change.

It was the middle managers, the ones who were expected to work as long hours as the top managers, but with every minute accounted for who were stressed. It was they who without being 'in' on the process of policy development, had to accept and implement the policies 'handed down

from on high'. As I found with the changes to the web sites, the problem was not so much the *fact* of the change, but the fact that here I was, expecting something that I had grown used to using, was now *not* that way. What is more, I was not involved in the change.

So one key in accommodating to change is the process of engaging with the ideas that are in the air. It is no use just resisting things because they are strange or new. It gets harder as we get older, true! But staying active, and 'alive' and avoiding Alzheimer's of the soul as well as of the body involves engaging with the new and an embrace of the transformations that are a normal part of 'natural life' and of 'baptismal life' too. It is the engagement with the ideas and the mutual commitment to taking on a process of change and development' that prevents these things from rolling over us. I'm sure that were I a 'techie' I would be developing web sites too! But I want to be involved in the process, not a simple resister of it. Some changes need to be resisted because they represent a movement in a direction that is 'beastly' rather than 'human' (See the battle between 'the Beast' and 'The Human One' in the book of Revelation). But it is in discussion and engagement with the Scriptures and ideas of what it means to be 'human' that this happens too. For me a part answer to the 'changes and chances of this fleeting world' is in 'ownership of the process of development'

Your 'Companion on The Way' and Priest



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