

# LIVING BY FAITH

## A letter for the ill, the aged, the shut-in, and the handicapped

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SFO National Family Co-chairs

We would like to begin this letter by introducing ourselves. We have recently been appointed as the co-chairs of the Family Commission. One of our responsibilities is to ensure that you receive this letter, *Living by Faith*, on a monthly basis. We would like to thank Sonia Bernardo for her service during the past few years for providing this letter to the brothers and sisters.

A little information about us: we are both from Cleveland, Ohio but most of our marriage of 20 years was spent in Columbus, Ohio and for the past four years in Northwest Indiana. We have three children Brendan, age 18, Meaghan, age 15 and Martin, age 13. Our home is in Crown Point, Indiana, which is near Chicago. Ken is the Director of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Gary and Kim is a kindergarten teacher at a charter school in Gary, Indiana. We have been professed for six years. We are members of the Little Portion Fraternity in Valparaiso, Indiana, which is part of Our Lady of Indiana region. Both of us look forward to sharing with you through this letter and welcome your thoughts as we support each other in our Franciscan journey.

Since our appointment to the National Family Commission, we have been reflecting on the numerous transitions and changes that have taken place in our lives during these past few years. These changes include moving to a new State, family illnesses and deaths, new jobs, new schools for our children, and now new responsibilities with the Order. Since we are experiencing these transitions and changes, it seemed to be a good topic to share in this letter. We have found transitions and change challenging because it calls us to “let go” and “let God.” We find that what is at the core of this challenge is the desire to control.

You may be finding that, due to circumstances beyond your “control,” or not of your making, you have to cope with transition and change too. Maybe due to illness, disability or age, you are coping with decreased mobility or health. Spouses or other individuals, who were your support, are no longer there to provide this for you. There are often three issues to take to prayer and reflection when coping with these circumstances. These issues are:  
*Control, Loss, and Anger.*

As circumstances change in our lives, we may feel we are “losing control,” or are no longer in charge of our destiny and more dependent on others, whereas, in the past independence was present. This change can cause us to feel loss. Some ways to cope with loss are to:

- Accept the reality of the loss: this means accepting that things have changed
- Experience the pain of grief: this sometimes means we have to allow ourselves to feel anger about our new situation, maybe anger at ourselves, others or even God
- Learn to invest in new activities: as we move beyond the pain of grief, we now can be open to new possibilities

As followers of Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis we are called to move to the point where transitions and change are part of the journey of becoming. Moving ever closer to the Kingdom where all loss, pain and grief will be washed away. Prayer is key to making the transition from pain to new life. If your current situation is causing you to experience: Fear, pray for the grace of trust; Anger, pray for the grace of peace; Loss or grief, pray for the grace of acceptance and serenity; Confusion, pray for the grace of discernment and wisdom.

### Reflection:

1. What are some recent transitions or changes that have occurred in your life during the past six months?
2. How have you handled these transitions or changes?
3. Are you experiencing fear, anger, loss or confusion due to these transitions or changes?
4. Do you pray for trust, peace, acceptance, serenity and wisdom to help you through this period?

Prayer: O Loving Father, allow me, during this time of transition and change, to experience your peace, so that all that I am going through now can lead to good and work to bring about your will for me. Let me not despair, but let me experience the power of resurrection to new life, through Christ our Lord. Amen

*“We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Roman 8: 28*

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things that I can change, and the wisdom to know the difference.