

# Unfinished projects

By David Gibson  
NC News Service

My oldest daughter now gets up almost as early as I do weekday mornings. But her reason is not the same as mine.

I rise early because I face an hour's commute by bus to the office. My daughter rises early because it takes her 30 minutes — or more? — to do her hair for school!

This amounts to a sea change in a child who just a few months ago hoped to break the world record for sleeping-in late and still making it to school on time. This kind of change, however — this large concern over appearance — is somewhat predictable in a child's development. This kind of change requires only minor adjustments on the part of others, along with a dash of patience. But this kind of change does not pass unnoticed.

Change. It is part of everyone's life.

Workstyles, homelife, education, health care, social values: Change is experienced in all these areas.

Perhaps the most common way change enters a person's life, however, is through other people.

We all grow older. Peoples' interests develop, attitudes expand, needs are reshaped, mistakes are made. No one's life is a finished product.

When a person changes, however, there are bound to be repercussions for others. One parent's story illustrates this.

A father was telling a group of

adult friends about a period in his teen-ager's life. The teen-ager's interests, along with her attitude toward schoolwork, had become a source of great concern to her parents, who felt they were witnessing a big, unwelcome change in her.

When the parents realized marijuana and alcohol were now playing a role in their child's life, they were stunned. They attributed it to something in their child that they did not understand and to a change in society that made drugs readily available.

Ultimately this situation was approached through counseling. But the level of trust and understanding that previously had existed in the relationship of the parents and their teen-ager would take a long time to return.

As the father told his story, he obviously was not just passing on information to others who might later benefit from it somehow. His story was more like a quest for understanding and support. He was struggling to grasp a changed relationship with his child that had confused him and left him apprehensive for a time.

People rejoice when changes bring them happiness. But they may need others who listen well and try to understand when they tell how change brought them pain, or left them floundering for answers.

Often when the word "change" enters a discussion, people tend to turn attention to the computers, space ships, medical technology or genetic research that is changing society's landscape. But one kind of change that virtually everyone experiences close up is the kind that influences their relationships; it enters the scene in a personal way.

As change occurs, it can open up new possibilities for people. This can make life more interesting. But change also can introduce the element of struggle into one's life.

Because of changes in oneself or in others, life has to be digested again and again, comprehended from new perspectives. That can be difficult. It may take time. Then people may experience a special need for support from others.

This process can produce a good result, of course. Some people think that in all their struggles to come to terms with change, God's Spirit is inviting them deeper and deeper into their life's meaning and potential.

(Gibson is editor of Faith Today.)

# FOOD...

## ...for thought

What distinguishes human beings from other creatures of this world?

Some experts answer that question by focusing on human speech. The manner, the extent and the complexity of human communication — speech — is different, they say. Speech opens up almost endless possibilities for life together, for communities.

Other experts focus on the human person's ability to think and reflect. The human being can take a mental step back from his or her life in order to ponder it, assess it.

Still others focus on human sharing, or the capacity to make decisions, or the ability to plan the future.

To the eyes of faith, humanity's distinguishing abilities reflect the soul or spirit — the mystery of the human person.

Human beings possess many abilities. For example, every person is gifted by God with a life that can expand and grow, a life that can mature.

People can become more than they already are. As they grow and mature, they change — and so do others who are part of their lives.

Does that mean personal change is always welcomed by all concerned since it is part of the process of maturing? No. Change sometimes is welcomed with open arms. But other times

it proves disconcerting. For personal change is accompanied by a certain risk: the risk that as people who are close to each other grow and change, they will somehow grow apart.

The challenge is to grow together, to change in such ways that each person's spirit expands without closing out the other.

Friends, parents and children, spouses, co-workers — all may have to face the question at some point: How can we change and mature together? Can we contribute to each other's growth?

The Christian vision suggests that people grow best when they not only grow together, but grow through each other. People have the ability to nourish each other's growth, according to this way of thinking.

But to do so, they need to call upon the unique gifts they possess as human beings, including:

- the power to speak, to communicate with others about the process of change taking place in their lives;
- the ability to step back from the process of personal change, to ponder it and to make decisions about it;
- the challenge to share the benefits of one's development with others and to plan for the future together.

## SECOND HELPINGS

"Diary of a Catechist," by Barbara Gargiulo. This book is a down-to-earth account of a young mother's transformation into a volunteer fourth-grade religion teacher in her parish. Mrs. Gargiulo describes her feelings, the bad times and the rewards as she settles down to an unfamiliar task. She tells how classes sometimes didn't go as planned and how she learned to deal with unruly 9-year-olds: "You can't change a person but you can change a mood." She tells how she put the maxim into practice one day through simply lighting a candle. This set the stage for prayer, she says, by putting the students in the right frame of mind. The book should be helpful to experienced catechists — they'll appreciate what she's going through — as well as to beginning catechists concerned about their own lack of experience. (Twenty-Third Publications, Box 180, Mystic, Conn. 06355. 1984. \$3.95.)

## ...for discussion

1. Look into your lifestyle. How has it changed in the last 10 years? What has changed in society or the church that has brought change for you personally?
2. Look into your lifestyle. What has remained the same for the last 10 years? What will remain the same in the future?
3. Think of a time when change entered your life in a most personal way — through change in someone close to you or through a change in yourself. What happened? How did you feel?
4. What does Father David O'Rourke mean when he says society is beginning to think of the family as just a collection of individuals? What more is there to the family?

## the new

portrait in the remark that "every scribe who is learned in the reign of God is like the head of a household who can bring from his storeroom both the new and the old" (Matthew 13:52).

The church already had a Gospel, that of Mark. But Matthew felt that a new situation called for another Gospel. He used most of Mark's material but expanded it.

Imagine! A new Gospel! The Christian community is a living, vital organism. It has experienced development and growth right from the beginning.

But of course, there is God himself "who cannot change and who is never shadowed over" (James 1:17).

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