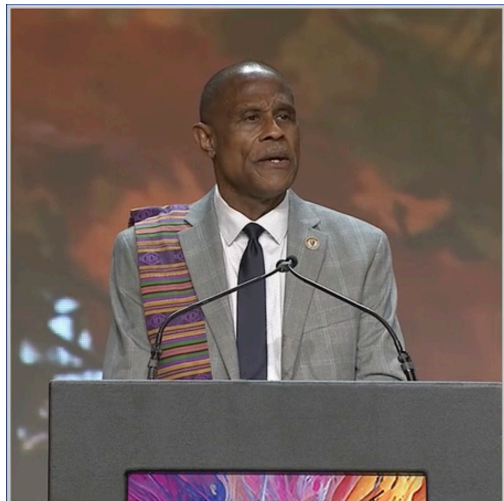


# THE CHALLENGE of the INTERIM TIME


Excerpts from “Our Time is Holy: Learning & Lamenting in an Interim Time”

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The Challenge of the Interim Time



“We are not living in an era of change. But a *change of era.*”

--Pope Francis, November 2015

“The principal question I place before you as you contemplate the theme of “Our Time is Now” is this:

**What does it mean to be a sign of courageous hope in a time that we do not know how to name?**

The central insight I offer is this: **Lament opens the space for the New, for dreams and new visions.** What I offer is more of a reflection than a fully worked out thesis. Therefore, this is **an invitation to dialogue and communal discernment** .... the fruit of my own contemplative prayer as we ... face a world and church in the midst of **unprecedented transitions and changes.**

The inspiration for my reflections comes from **a poem** that may or may not be familiar to you. I invite you to listen to its initial stanzas as we move our minds, hearts and spirits into this time together (the emphases are my own):

## *Blessing for: The Interim Time*

By John O’Donohue

When near the end of day, life has drained  
Out of light, and it is too soon  
For the mind of night to have darkened things,

No place looks like itself, loss of outline  
Makes everything look strangely in-between,  
Unsure of what has been, or what might come.

In this wan light, even trees seem groundless.  
In a while it will be night, but nothing  
Here seems to believe the relief of darkness.

You are in this time of the interim  
Where everything seems withheld.

The path you took to get here has washed out;  
The way forward is still concealed from you.  
The old is not old enough to have died away;  
The new is still too young to be born.”

You cannot lay claim to anything;  
In this place of dusk,  
Your eyes are blurred;  
And there is no mirror ....”

“I want us to dwell in this notion of being in an interim time, an **indefinite time, a time unnamed and for now unnamable.** We could use other words to describe this time, words such as “liminal” and “transitional.” They are apt, but they have become perhaps too familiar through casual use in our religious and formation discourse.

**Interim time. Gap time.  
In-between time. You can't go back, but you don't know where forward is.  
The experience is of the collapse of security and certainty in the midst of the unknown and unknowable.**

In a 2015 address to a national Italian Catholic conference, Pope Francis declared, **‘We are not living in an era of change, but a change of era.’** It is one thing to live in a time of rapid and momentous changes. That is dizzying and disorienting enough. But to live in a change of era? **To live on the cusp of exponentially different ways of being, thinking living, praying, and doing?**

This is a challenge of an altogether different order ... a time when ‘the old is not old enough to have died away, and the new is still too young to be born.’ It is an anxious time, a fearful time. A time of loss. **A time of (often unexpressed) grieving. And a time for relinquishing the old for the sake of the new.** (Easier said than done).”

... I offer “the interim time” and “a change of era” as apt descriptions of this ‘holy now’ in which we live. ...I will discuss several ‘signs of the time,’ that is, **seismic developments or sites of disruption** that illustrate how and where I see a ‘change of eras’ occurring.

**I next discuss the deep anxiety that motivates the anger, violence and fear that grips so many in our nation and our world.**



I move then to outline **how the deep transitions that grip our nation find a parallel in the dynamics of contemporary religious life.**

**I then turn to our faith tradition of lament to discern what must be done to better navigate the severe challenges that face us.**

I conclude with how **lament prepares us for the arrival of the new,** and offer a final image that might inspire our thinking, praying and dreaming as we live in this interim time of **intense and massive change.**”

**To view the video of the full presentation, CLICK:**  
<https://vimeo.com/998886507>

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