
Across That Bridge

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
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My summer reading includes John Lewis' latest book, "Across That Bridge: Life Lessons and a Vision for Change." The bridge referred to in the title is the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. It is a symbol of the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march for voting rights. Lewis, the 13-term congressman from Atlanta and civil rights movement legend, writes about the life lessons, implications and virtues that have grown out of crossing *that* bridge during *that* time and about what getting to the other side means, personally and for the nation.

I was struck by his words because they echo what I was taught by my family "to love those who hate you and what you represent; to try to be Christ-like even if there is the possibility of dying at the hands of another. My formation occurred during the time about which Lewis writes. It was a time when crossing bridges represented progress, when violence "even death" was possible as we marched, and when the unsung and the notable walked together. It still inspires me today.

Growing up in Albany, Georgia, mass meetings were held at my home church many nights each week. Strategy was planned at our dinner table, as my parents were very active in the movement. They were professionals who had to walk a fine line when it came to approaching and crossing bridges. Our community was a place of formation and was supportive of its youth and our activities. It was a community that was filled with awe, fun and challenges. During my youth the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act were passed. Bridges were crossed, lives were changed.

All of us, as God's people, are in a place of formation most of our lives. This happens when we allow ourselves to move "spiritually" from one level of living to another. Growth is inevitable.

Some refer to this as transformation; others name the places and detours along the way; and still others see this simply a part of the journey. Regardless of what you call it, there are always bridges that we must cross. The bridge may be represented by parents aging, illness in one's family, children becoming adults before our eyes, marriage, divorce, surgery, birthdays, anniversaries, downsizing "all bridges to cross.

There will always be bridges to cross. When we go across those bridges, let us be sure that we are walking with a constant companion, God, who is always present and walks with us, leads us, prods us to move forward or to remain still, and then go.

I am thankful that we have bridges in our lives. It keeps me attentive. Every time I see another bridge in the distance, or find myself being pushed across a bridge by others, I have to decide whether I am going to cross it completely or not. We are given free will.

If crossing means bringing about unity, or some semblance of it, count me in. If it brings something that will benefit humanity, count me in. I will grow spiritually knowing God has promised that he will never leave or forsake you or me.

It is good to be on this bridge "the bridge that leads to a place of thankfulness and love, always" and walk forward together.

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