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Fireworks light up the sky as Filipinos welcome the New Year under a slight drizzle in Manila, Philippines. Friday, Jan. 1, 2016. Traditionally Filipinos welcome the New Year with firecrackers, fireworks, midnight snacks known as “media noche” and almost anything to make the loudest noise possible.(AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

Fireworks light up the sky as Filipinos welcome the New Year under a slight drizzle in Manila, Philippines. Friday, Jan. 1, 2016. Traditionally Filipinos welcome the New Year with firecrackers, fireworks, midnight snacks known as “media noche” and almost anything to make the loudest noise possible.(AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

My New Year’s resolution for 2015 was to light a candle instead of cursing the darkness. I did, or I did try my utmost. As a result, I must have tempered critical comment 90% of the time, or deliberately stopped myself from commenting at all. A Facebook friend calls it “self-censorship”, I think, and I can sympathize. Still, I choose that path because I have a message that even I must not obfuscate with self-generated distracting noise.

The wise of the world always say that the only constant reality in life is change. This truism seems simple enough to understand. Everything changes, and the main visible difference is only the rate of change. The most immovable or seeming permanent still undergo change, albeit at a rate so slow that the human eye (and consequently, the human mind) cannot notice it. At one point, we may begin to think that some things do not change. Well, if that happens, we are terribly wrong.

This illusion of absolute permanence develops a resistance to the reality of change and must be among the greatest causes of tension and conflict in human and societal life. We cannot believe in the constancy of change yet believe in exceptions. But a most insidious thought has been given credence by the popular and overused phrase, “but we are only human ...”, and mankind has been given a way out for any mistake committed.

We have to thank 2015 for the major conflicts and tensions it caused. Whenever something disturbed us badly, be it the climate or terrorism, we are jolted back to the reality of change and the consequence of insisting on making permanent what is not. Even the most dominant of powers cannot change the universal order of things. Dictators and tyrants have tried to rule the world and only a few have managed to succeed – but for only a short time. No one, nothing, can stand in the way of change.

Climate change has become a buzzword for many individuals and countries. But whenever did the climate not change? Climate patterns that last for centuries are not permanent, just patterns. Just because change becomes noticeable after a few human lifetimes does not mean it had never been happening; it just remained unnoticed by the more ignorant.

The reality of change is what makes life alive and exciting. Our body changes. Our emotions change. Our understanding changes. Because they do, what makes us believe that we can build anything that does not change? Are physical human life, human emotional life and human understanding not the fundamental elements of life for humans? How then can we create that which is greater than us?

But we try. Our insecurities push us to make things stand still, even if they cannot. And when we use our power, when we use what we think is superior force, to insist on making things permanent, we plant and nurture the seeds of conflict, pain and destruction. Because change will come anyway.

The political turbulence that is happening in the Philippines, and will continue to happen in 2016, is not an exception. Many other political situations in the world are in turmoil as well, and some much worse than ours. But those among us who insist on our way, on what has always been, or what cannot be, will tend to see only what disturbs the Philippines as though ours is the only country in the world. The fact is, however, that Filipinos being what they are, we are among the most susceptible to external change, to international change. Culturally, economically, politically, the most dependent are always the most affected by global dynamics.

I know that what is local to us is, of course, most important. But when we struggle to cope, and cope well, with a fast-changing world, it is not just good but necessary to understand what is happening beyond our boundaries. Our leaders, especially, must develop the capacity to understand globally yet act locally, to translate global dynamics to the Philippine and Filipino setting. The lack of this capacity increases the turbulence.

It is not only politicians who comprise leadership. Bishops and priests are part of it. Professors and taipans are part of it. Traditional media outlets and influential bloggers in social media are part of it. And because there is a glaring lack of wisdom and cohesiveness among leadership, 2016 cannot be anything but turbulent.

From the turbulence, though, change finds more pathways to express itself. From greater consciousness and acceptance of climate change, man can adapt and relate better to nature. From the conflict in the Middle East and the terrorism it has spawned, deeper concern by the rest of the world will produce a more generous and kinder response, notwithstanding the initial bigotry of the more fearful. And from the same turbulence, religious institutions will be challenged towards dreaded internal reform and external posture to their faithful and the world.

It is really not that dire. Great change has been happening all the while and creating powerful impact on our society and the world. Technology has sparked the most dramatic change of all. But because the change was not the prime effort of wisdom, the impact of technology on societal life has not been understood well enough by societal leaders. In other words, the younger generations are changing on their own, with little benefit from the mistakes and lessons of the older ones. It may well be the younger ones who will trigger the wisdom of their parents because technology is the driver of change today.

If we cannot avoid the turbulence that will greet us in 2016, we might as well understand as much as we can about it. We might want to know that the rate of change has picked up great speed, and we will not be riding a ferry but possibly a roller coaster. Because it will happen anyway. And because change can be our greatest friend.

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Happy New Year.