

Aging Gracefully - An Invitation to Contemplation

This week, for your consideration, is a summary of the discussion on appreciation from Sr. Joan Chittister's book, *The Gift of Years – Growing Older Gracefully*. Following the summary are quotations on the burden and blessing of appreciation, a personal reflection, and a call to contemplate meaning in view of your own life, no matter where you happen to be on the journey.

Appreciation

When something is gone, why is it only then that we begin to miss it? Perhaps, as Sr. Joan writes, “the instinct for life rises in us only when we lack it.” In our older years, we know that we cannot take life for granted, cannot devour it – we can only savor it. In our younger years we fill our lives with activities – hurrying here and there - we do not pause long enough to live well. Now that there is time, we can look at everything more deeply and live more fully, not missing the pleasure of a good book or the ability to linger over a cup of tea conversing with a dear friend. Savoring life can become the new normal for us – no more rushing to and from various places – only stopping to look deeply at everything and enter into a more spiritual way of being.

Burden and Blessing

“The burden of having to confront these lost years lies in the fear that I have missed most of my life while I was living it head up and running.”

“The blessing lies in the fact that I not only come to appreciate the past, but also the present in a whole new way.”

Personal Reflection

There are days when I think, “Where did the day go?” It's a good thing if I have been “in the zone” and productive, but many times, I can't even remember what I have done – the day filled with errands, email, junk mail, etc. Instead of lamenting the loss of my time, I remind myself yet again, to pay more attention to the things that matter, to eliminate the unnecessary or distracting activities and attend to living fully in the present moment with gratitude and appreciation for all that occurs. I call an old friend, work on improving myself and my surroundings or spend time doing something creative, like quilting, writing, learning Spanish or focusing on my spiritual life. There is so much that the Spirit reveals to us, if we only appreciate and live life, moment by moment.

Invitation to Personal Reflection and Contemplation

What do you appreciate most? Develop a gratitude practice to commemorate those moments and people that mean the most to you.

In what ways does life keep you so busy that you do not notice the beauty of the present? Find one small way to appreciate the present moment, to enter more deeply into your relationship with God and others.

Warm regards,

Barbara Szulc, Psy.D.

Parish Counseling Services are available upon request. For an appointment, send an email to BSzulc@HGAParish.org. There are no fees; however, Holy Guardian Angels Parish kindly accepts free-will offerings.