

Aging Gracefully - An Invitation to Contemplation

This week, for your consideration, is a summary of the discussion on faith from Sr. Joan Chittister's book, *The Gift of Years – Growing Older Gracefully*. Following the summary are quotations on the burden and blessing of faith, 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.

Faith

Sr. Joan writes, "Darkness is the pathology of the soul." We know that we will someday die, but we do not know when, how or what the moment will be like. No one can accompany us on this last step of our journey, which culminates for us alone in a moment of absolute surrender. Throughout our lives, we practiced faith – faith in banks, governments, ourselves. Now, we take our faith and place it elsewhere, in God who gave us the miracle of this life and who "softens our fears of the darkness whose end we do not know."

Burden and Blessing

"A burden of these years is that we are tempted to think that once we ourselves are no longer powerful enough to work our will on the world around us, we are at the mercy of a cruel universe."

"A blessing of these years is that we are now beginning to trust in the life-giving God we do not see, more than we have trusted in the accessories of life, which we have seen both come without guarantee and go without warning."

Personal Reflection

Faith is inherent in daily living; we believe that we will see the sun rise each morning, that water will flow from the tap, and that we will be well. And, even when we are not well, we survive our challenges and trust that life will continue until the end of our days. This belief, this faith, is born of our relationship with God. We count on the goodness that surrounds us, helping us to live our lives. When tragedy strikes, and we survive it, we look back and recognize our blessings, but we are only able to do that when we have learned to trust, as Julian of Norwich wrote, "All shall be well, all shall be well...for there is a force of love moving through the universe that holds us fast and will never let us go."

Invitation to Personal Reflection and Contemplation

In whom or what do you place your trust?

How has your faith helped you to soften your fear of the darkness?

Pray for a way to live your faith, and commit to doing one small thing to foster the faith of 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.