

Aging Gracefully - An Invitation to Contemplation

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

Letting Go

How do we decide that we have lived a successful life? Up until retirement, our life's journey has been about accomplishments – first steps, first word, first day of school – and meeting milestones – first job, first car, first home, etc. We have spent time accumulating, and now we have time to divest. All along others have “graded us” – school, work, community. Now we will grade ourselves on how well we have lived. We decide what to do with our possessions, and realize that those milestones we met don't have the same impact they once did. We are at a crossover to a new, more spiritual way of being. We can set aside possessions and step into being our truest self, realizing that we are more than what we have. Sr. Joan writes, “The time is here. We have a chance to become what all the living has enabled us to be. Now we can make sense of it. But only if we can let go of the past. Only if we can let go of all the old ideas of success, all the old marks of humanity and finally, now, allow ourselves to become simply human instead.”

Burden and Blessing

“A burden of these years is the temptation to cling to the times and things behind us rather than move to the liberating moments ahead.”

“A blessing of these years is the invitation to go lightfooted into the here and now – because we spend far too much of life preparing for the future rather than enjoying the present.”

Personal Reflection

To be able to enjoy the present is essential for all of us, not only those who are growing older. However, it seems to be easier to accomplish once all of the obligations of family, work and life are satisfied. I never really looked forward to retirement, but now that I have retired, I recognize the gift that has arisen. I can pursue interests that were set aside during the working years and yes, I have begun to deal with the “stuff” I have accumulated over the years. I originally vowed to tackle one box from the crawspace per week, but have since revised it to one box per month. Letting go is difficult, especially if we closely identify with our life's work, but the process is well worth entering because it moves us into becoming more spiritual beings, and readies us for the rest of our life journey.

Invitation to Personal Reflection and Contemplation.

What are you holding on to rather than letting it go?

Are you able to focus on friendship, family and relationships rather than all of the “things” that may be holding you captive?

Are you ready to deepen your spirituality through simple practices and enjoy the blessings that each day brings?

Warm regards,

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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.