

## ***Aging Gracefully - An Invitation to Contemplation***

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

### ***Relationships***

When things change because we have lost a loved one, we may deeply feel the loss of relationship. When that happens, we choose between going it alone or risking the chance of developing new relationships. There is a strong temptation to avoid being vulnerable and simply allow an emotional death to occur before our actual physical death. However, as humans, relationships are essential to our well-being. We can choose to be alone, or we can choose to trust that we can engage in good relationships once more. If we choose relationships, we have to learn to invite others into our lives, to meet others, and to learn once more to enjoy the company of others.

### ***Burden and Blessing***

*“A burden of these years is that being alone, as bad as it feels, is easier than doing what it takes to be with someone else. It would be so much easier now simply to close the sunshades of our soul and give up. So much easier simply to wait for death to claim what has already died in us – a love for life and a trust in its essential goodness. So we cut ourselves out of our own lives and watch them wither away.”*

*“A blessing of these years is that they offer us the chance to be excited by new personalities, new warmth, new activities, new people all over again. Does it demand that we fall in love? No. But it does demand that we love someone else enough to be just as interested in them as we are in ourselves. It demands that we set out to make tomorrow happy.”*

### ***Personal Reflection***

As a practitioner of Individual Psychology, I find common ground between Adler's concept of social interest, expressed as a deep concern for the welfare of others, beyond our immediate circle of friends or neighbors, and spirituality, expressed as compassionate action in service of others. It is through the compassionate service we offer to others that we deepen our relationship with God and with our dear neighbors. The question I continually ask myself is this: “Are my relationships with God and others guided by the Holy Spirit?” Taking time for prayer and discernment is one way I am able to sustain positive relationships. Another is participating in my Congregation of St. Joseph Associate Conversation Circle, where we gather to pray and share the state of our hearts. Through the years, I have come to more deeply value the spiritual, and I am grateful for those with whom I walk the journey of becoming the person God intends me to be. I am grateful to serve as a Holy Guardian Angel's Parish Counselor and accompany those working on deepening relationships with self and others. It isn't always easy to ask for help, but those who do often find the process to be a rewarding one.

### ***Invitation to Personal Reflection and Contemplation.***

Are your relationships life-giving or might they need to change?

When loss weighs us down, to whom do we turn?

Is there one small change you can make to deepen a relationship?

Warm regards,

*Barbara Szulc, Psy.D.*

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