

Aging Gracefully - An Invitation to Contemplation

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

Limitations

Sr. Joan writes of the “gift of years,” which involves the ability to recognize we are all on the journey to old age and that we are able to shape our lives so that we become the person we wish to be. Older people do have limitations – they may walk slower, wear hearing aids, experience vision problems – but those are only boundaries, not barriers. While experiencing limitations, we become more sensitive to the needs of others. We contact our leaders, start a petition or write letters to the editor, becoming “prophets of the poor and unknown, the limited and unloved, the needy and forgotten.” Limitations are a choice, not a foregone conclusion, and Sr. Joan reminds us that we can all become the visionaries the world so desperately needs at this time.

Burden and Blessing

“The burden of these years is the possibility that we might succumb to our limitations as if they were the real definition of age, rather than an aspect of everyone’s life.”

“The blessing of these years is that we know at last what really matters, and the world is waiting to hear it, if only we will make the effort and don’t give in to our limitations.”

Personal Reflection

Sr. Joan writes, “Limitations, at any age, call out something in us we never considered before.” I think of how very true this is – without experiencing our own limitations, how can we become aware of the needs of others? I became aware of the suffering of others through my own suffering, and the more I began to heal, the more I wanted the same for others. Listening to the stirrings of our hearts and acting upon them leads to beautiful things. Open your soul to contemplation, and allow the Spirit to move you in ways you never considered before.

Invitation to Personal Reflection and Contemplation

When have you overcome a personal limitation, and what have you learned?

Engage in one small practice of contemplation each day – what is arising in you?

Have you become sensitive to the needs of others? How have you responded?

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.