

Aging Gracefully - An Invitation to Contemplation

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

Mystery

In our later life, we have one sure companion: time. We begin to enjoy the harvest of the efforts of our working years. We move from long-standing routines to new freedom, and it can be difficult to experience this new way of being. Mystery allows us to evolve, rather than continue to live a busy, scheduled life. Sr. Joan writes that mystery, 'the notion that something wonderful can happen at any time if we will only allow space for it, takes us into a show new awareness of the immanence of God in time.' In older age, time reveals the goodness of God, and each day invites us to trust and wonder.

Burden and Blessing

"A burden of these years is to fear the ever-approaching mystical before us, as if the God-ness we have known in life will desert us in death."

"A blessing of these years is coming to see that behind everything so stolid, so firm, so familiar in front of us runs a descant of mystery and meaning to be experience in ways we never thought possible before. To become free of the prosaic and the scheduled and the pragmatic is to break the world open in ways we never dreamed of. In this new world, a mountain, a bench, a grassy path is far more than simply itself. It is a symbol of unprecedented possibilities, of the holiness of time."

Personal Reflection

When I can't understand the reason for something, despite trying, I always chalk it up to "mystery." Personally, I like answers, and I like understanding the why of things. But Sr. Joan speaks of something different when she writes of mystery. Here, she is inviting us into the present, into awareness, into paying attention to the way God is present in our lives. If we slow down and experience life differently, without the schedules and the rush, we find ourselves in awe of what is around us. Just the other day, I sat in the library to read for an hour – something I have not previously had time to do. I experienced a feeling of peace and presence at the simple act of being still enough to enjoy the moment. I noticed everything around me – the books, fireplace, comfortable chairs and was grateful for all of it. I was thankful for the efforts of the staff and community for maintaining such a wonderful, quiet space. My time in the library refreshed and opened me to the blessing that mystery offers.

Invitation to Personal Reflection and Contemplation.

What have you been noticing these days – are there any surprising revelations?

Name one small practice you can begin to ensure you will not overlook the mystery present in your life.

Find ways to share what you have learned with others to inspire them to join you in the wonder of these years.

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.