

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

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

### ***Adjustment***

As we enter the last stage of growth, we may find ourselves having outlived dear friends and family members. Suddenly we are having to deal with things we would rather avoid. Change is difficult, but it is not what happens to us as much as what we choose to do with it. In some ways, we are losing our younger self, and we are not happy about it. Sometimes we avoid the circumstance altogether and withdraw from everyone and everything. Other times, we resist adjustment to the point of projecting blame for our situations on others. Further we may find ourselves in new environments, but adapt poorly, finding fault with everything: the food, the temperature, the lighting, the people, etc. A more mature way of coping is to acknowledge our pain and live through it by finding new ways to experience joy. By caring for others, we can transcend our own difficulties and demonstrate to those younger than us, that yes, life continues in goodness and holiness, if only we choose it.

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

*“A burden of these years is that when we must consciously decide how we will live, what kind of person we will become now, what kind of personality and spirituality we will bring into every group how alive we intend to be.”*

*“A blessing of these years is being able to live as open-heartedly, and to adjust so well, that others can look to us and see what being old can bring in terms of life, of holiness, of goodness to make the world new again.”*

### ***Personal Reflection***

Without a doubt, accepting our circumstances or adjusting to our situation is difficult. Whenever I encounter difficulties, I like to remember a line from Robert Frost's poem, *Servant of Servants*, “... the best way out is always through.” It goes along the lines of Sr. Joan Chittister's opinion that it is not what happens to us, but what we do with it that matters. Moving through something particularly difficult means facing and dealing with pain, resolving to choose that which sustains life, and looking for the light that leads us to living out God's desire for us. We do not need to take this part of our journey alone or to suffer in silence; there are those who will help us. All we have to do is avail ourselves of the invitation to God's grace, and ask for company along the way.

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

As you think about your life, name some of the times you have made adjustments when faced with difficult circumstances.

What did you discover about your ability to adapt, and who helped you along the way?

Are you willing to share your story in order to help others faced with similar circumstances?

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). No fees will be assessed, however, free-will offerings to Holy Guardian Angels Parish are kindly accepted.