

Aging Gracefully - An Invitation to Contemplation

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

Authority

Updates are fast and furious these days, necessary to keep pace with the speed of technological change. Are we applying planned obsolescence, known to us since the '70's, to people? As technology advances, are we forcing older people to the margins of the workforce? In a culture where new is better than old, version 14.1 is better than version 11, is younger also better? Historically, we look to elders for wisdom and to share their knowledge so that younger generations will live well. Now, older generations are outdated and no longer as valued for their experience, insight or wisdom. The challenge of the transition to retirement is finding a way to demonstrate the value that comes with older age, as a result of living fully, by continuing to engage with others for the benefit of all.

Burden and Blessing

“A burden of these years is the temptation to consider ourselves obsolete, and to waste this precious time only on ourselves. It is the temptation for ultimate narcissism.”

“A blessing these years is our involvement in the important questions of the present, so that the time to come will be more blessed than our own – because of the insights we both preserve in ourselves and pass on to others before we go.”

Personal Reflection

I often hear parents say, I want my children to have a chance at a better life. But what does that really mean? Does it mean having more things, having it easier or is it something deeper? To me, having a good life is one that is free of unnecessary suffering, filled with gratitude and appreciation for everything that happens and sharing our gifts with others. It is a life lived with meaning and that has the authority that comes with experience, persistence, and responsibility to help others live meaningful lives. It is what I want for my own children and for everyone. I chose to study psychology at the midpoint of my career because I felt a strong desire that everyone have a good life. The Holy Spirit guides and inspires us to live our faith as Jesus taught us. I imagine each of us can recall someone who profoundly affected how we live out our daily lives, whether familiar only to us or well known to others. For me, Dorothy Day is one of those persons of faith; she tirelessly gave of herself during the Great Depression and long afterwards to give those less fortunate a “cup of coffee and some bread.” Her faith continues to inspire me and so many others to this day. There are generous men and women working at our nation's border so that others may also have some coffee and some bread. If we do not live with meaning, we leave nothing for the next generation to learn and pass on to future generations.

Invitation to Personal Reflection and Contemplation

What blessings do you recognize that have come to you from your elders?

What have you learned through experience, survival, persistence?

How do you view your responsibility to share the authority of example with others?

How will you use the lessons of your life – experience, persistence, struggle, love, success – to contribute to the meaning of life for others?

Warm regards,

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Parish Counseling Services are available upon request. For an appointment, send an email to BSzulc@HGAParish.org. No fees will be assessed, however, free-will offerings to Holy Guardian Angels Parish are kindly accepted.