

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

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

### ***Possibility***

Sr. Joan writes that people are living longer lives each decade that passes, and gerontological data indicates that there are actually very few years of helplessness. Because of this, one would expect our lives to be full of new possibilities. Yet, at this time of our lives we enter a period of dislocation; we move out of our homes into retirement villages or smaller apartments, and find ourselves surrounded by unfamiliar people and places. In addition to dislocation, we experience discontinuity because we do not have the same social networks, jobs, and salaries. If we are open to recognize it, this moment is a moment of "emancipating possibility." We get to begin anew, spiritually and socially. Our old roles do not define us, and we can use our inner authority to think and act differently. To live in a posture of possibility, takes energy, and the only way to gain energy for living is by actually doing it. Learn something new, join a club, plan a trip, make new friends and begin a new life. Study the clouds, feel the sun on your face, enjoy being alive!

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

*"A burden of these years is to assume that when the great change from being defined and delimited by the past – however good it may have been – is over, that life is over."*

*"A blessing of these years is to realize, early, that this stage of life is full of possibilities, full of the desire to go on living, to seize the independence, to create new activities and networks of interesting new people."*

***Personal Reflection*** It is cliché to say, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life," but it really is true. There is a book written by Oliver Burkeman called, "Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals." I haven't read it yet, but the reviews have been positive. Mr. Burkeman observes that the person who lives to be eighty has 4,000 weeks of life, hence the title of the book. When we age, we probably start thinking of how we have chosen to spend our weeks. Sometimes our evaluations cause us to believe we haven't done enough, but rather than pushing to do more, to achieve, to account for each moment and spend them very judiciously, God invites us to moments of grace in this new stage of life. We delight in people, nature, dreams, and possibilities, knowing that the Holy Spirit will inspire us to action for the good of the world. From that inspiration, we derive life-giving energy as we serve one another.

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

Allow yourself to consider new possibilities... what begins to emerge?

How will you choose to live with energy and purpose?

What are you called to do?

Can you commit to one small, positive practice that is new for you?

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.