



Aging and Spirituality

A Personal Experience

An invitation to observe, question,
authenticate, choose, reflect, respond

The Plan

- **Introduce myself with credentials of caregiving as well as academic and professional experience**
- **Offer a perspective on “aging” from a developmental point of new**
- **Give a perspective of “spirituality” as a shared human experience**
- **Read four personal reflections of the intersection of my own aging and spirituality**
- **Some brief suggestions of further reading**

Introduction

- **Caregiver/Nurturer**
- **Pink and blue for babies**
- **Grandparents/church surrogates**
- **Call to prayer, service, evangelism**



Academic Background

- **Oblate School of Theology**
Master of Theological Studies
(concentration in spirituality)
- **Center for Spiritual Growth and the**
Contemplative Life (spiritual direction)
- **Perkins School of Theology**
(Christianity and the Global Community)



Professional/Ecclesial Background

- **Mother/Baby Advocate**
- **Lay Eucharistic Minister**
- **Professional Chaplain**
- **Acute Care for the Elderly (A.C.E. unit)**



Aging

Begins at birth – just different names until about age 50 in our culture

- **Growing up**
- **Coming into one's own**
- **Beginning again**

(Piaget and Erikson)



Stages of Aging

- **Infancy of Old Age**
- **Just “kids”**
- **New adolescence**
- **Encore adulthood**
- **The Silver Tsunami**



Stages of Aging Continued

- **Rebirthing**
- **Competence**
- **Identity**
- **Generativity**
- **Integration**



Transformation

- Embraced with authentic spirituality
- Nurtured by those with humility
- Celebrated by the brave and the true



Spirituality

- **May include religion and its practices**
- **Always goes beyond the mere bonds of tradition and community**
- **A human phenomenon with divine implications**



Spirituality

- **Demands commitment to continuing conversion**

to always asking the next question

and doing the next right thing as best we can know it



Spirituality

- **Contains a dynamism that creates and sustains the life abundant when practiced with openness and honesty**
- **Is sometimes dangerous**
- **Always asking us to be present to the present and ready to grow beyond today**



As spirituality intersects with aging, a plethora of reactions occur:

- A burst of faith development
- A loss of faith
- Gratitude for habits of devotion
- Patterns of acceptance and anticipation of newness



As spirituality intersects with aging, a plethora of reactions occur:

- Challenges beyond our resources
- Denial and stagnation
- The wisdom of Silence
- The fear of absence



Meeting others at the Intersection

- **Recognizing one's own spiritual strengths and needs**
- **Helping with prayerful attention, active listening (more than ears) practical advice, and encouragement**



Four Little Windows

of the intersection of aging and spirituality from my own life

- I hope they will be thought provoking.
- Listen for the spirituality, the challenge to authentic growth in each.
- Pray with me for the continued dynamism of the Spirit within each of us. Amen.

The Old Grey Mare

a memory of my grandmother, Lola Hill, circa 1984

We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses... Paul's letter to the Hebrews

The Price of Freedom

Choose life... the book of Deuteronomy

Three Quotes

Let the dead bury the dead... the Gospel according to Matthew

Honor your father and your mother... the fifth of the Ten Commandments

I know that my Redeemer lives... the book of Job

My Mother, My Self

Let today's trouble be enough for today. Consider the lilies... St. Matthew

Suggested readings

- **Joan Chittister**
- **Joan Erikson**
- **Richard Rohr**
- **Gail Sheehy**



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From the Book of Common Prayer

**This is another day, O Lord.
I know not what it will bring forth, but
Make me ready, Lord, for whatever it may be.**

If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely.

If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly.

If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently.

And if I am to do nothing, let me do it gallantly.

**Make these words more than words, and
Give me the Spirit of Jesus. Amen.**