

AGING *in His Grace*

ST. BENEDICT ORTHODOX CHURCH
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WEEK 5~ Gratitude for the Elderly

I. Reviewing our Lessons

II. Gratitude for the Elderly and Old Age

- We live in a society highly age-segregated and ageist
- Life, as many of us see it, encompasses children and teenagers in school, adults in the work force and then...well...what else is there? The elderly fall through the cracks.
- This is a terrible tragedy.

III. Gifts of Old Age: Wisdom and Tradition

- “You shall rise before the gray-headed and honor the presence of an old man”
~ Leviticus 19:32
- Traditionally, the elderly have always been seen as beacons of wisdom.
- Are we so enlightened today that we’ve moved passed all that?

IV. Gifts of Old Age: What it Means To Be Human

- We live in a culture that defines personhood by rationality, agency, autonomy, possession, sexual preference, and so on. Old age robs of this...and this is fortunate. It brings us an opportunity to discover something of who I am which doesn’t fade

V. Gifts of Old Age: A Chance to Slow Down

- Spend time with the elderly...learn to slow down, breathe, and be still

VI. Gifts of Old Age: Memento Mori

- Gives us an opportunity to draw close to death
- Memento Mori – “Remember Thy Mortality”
 - “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”
~ Matthew 24:42
 - “In your heart, be always ready for your departure. If you are wise, you will expect it at every hour.” ~ St. Isaac the Syrian

- **Morbid or Celebratory?**
 - “Remembrance of Death” is not a denial of life.
 - It is life’s enhancement.
- **The nearness of death, therefore is a great gift.**
 - It helps us to see life as it truly is, and to discover and remember our most innate purpose in this life.
 - **I can say very strongly**, that my time spent with aging and dying people has imbued my life with so much richness — in some ways, it has been the greatest gift to me.
- **During so many hours by the side of dying patients...**
 - holding hands with Susan as she breathed her last breaths; gazing silently at the beautiful eyes of Mary, who was lost and confused; listening to the same stories over and over about Bob’s industrious parents — I have often encountered the transcendental.

VII. Take in the Good Energy

- **Something happens to a person in the twilight of life.**
 - The responsibilities, affairs, and preoccupations of young adulthood suddenly become less important.
 - The noise of man’s world grows quiet, and is replaced by a melody of a very different kind.
 - No wonder so many of us are uncomfortable in this setting.
 - But this silence, this stillness, this foreign air, is the very medicine of our soul.
- **For all of these reasons then:**
 - A community or an individual person, that takes time to fully include older adults into daily life, will have the opportunity to share a divine and transformative encounter.

VIII. Gerotranscendence: Pilgrimage to the New Jerusalem

- **With Old Age comes an exile, and an exile away from so much.**
 - But it is an exile that leads in a direction, for leaving one world always entails entering another.
 - Perhaps, therefore, lets rather think of it as a pilgrimage.
 - A pilgrimage in which we can all participate, whether personally or as we fellowship with our elders.
- Let us pray and hope that this becomes a pilgrimage towards the New Jerusalem, where: **“there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”** (Rev. 21:4).