

**OFFICE OF IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY
Finding God in – of All Things! – My Aging
Campion Conference & Renewal Center**

Weston, MA

Wednesday, September 11, 2019, 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM

MODERATOR

Nancy Kehoe, R.S.C.J., Ph.D.

PRESENTERS

Rev. Myles Sheehan, S.J., M.D.

Rev. Walter Smith, S.J., Ph.D.

Robert L. Weber, Ph.D.

The Campion Conference & Renewal Center and the Office of Ignatian Spirituality announce a half day colloquium for Jesuits and those who accompany them on their spiritual journeys and in their aging.

Responding to the Society's Universal Apostolic Preference on the Spiritual Exercises and discernment, this colloquium will consider some of the key developmental challenges facing aging Jesuits. We will explore ways in which the Exercises can assist an aging Jesuit with insight, warmth of heart, and a spiritual freedom that gracefully leads to final fulfillment in God.

SE WEEK FOUR: Resurrection Appearances and the *Contemplatio as Amorem*

Robert L. Weber, Ph.D.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

At this time, as you face your own difficult transitions due to aging, ask yourself these questions:

1. What is most difficult about your growing older and your transitions as you see them?
2. Have these challenged your faith and trust in God?
3. How might your feelings such as anger and despair be distracting you from appreciating the blessings that are present?

4. How has bringing these negative and disconsolate feelings to your prayer – “[honestly] praying the truth,” as Father Bill Barry, SJ writes – grown you spiritually?
5. What spiritual fruits might you harvest from your challenging situation that you are only just beginning to see?
6. Can you discern that you are changing and being transformed and converted in the depths of your spiritual life through your experience?

Three Impacts of Aging (Henri Nouwen)

- **Marginalization** - Rejection by Society
- **Desolation** – Rejection by Others (Losses and Abandonment)
- **Loss of Self-Respect** – Rejection by Self

What is a Spiritual Life?

*The spiritual life is not a life before, after, or beyond our everyday existence. No, the spiritual life can only be real when it is lived **in the midst of the pains and joys of the here and now.*** (Henri Nouwen)

Spirituality (Anthony De Mello, S.J.) is:

- Being awake
- Getting rid of illusions
- Never being at the mercy of any event, thing or person
- Discovering the diamond mine inside yourself
- Religion is intended to lead you there

BEING AWAKE

1. How are your particular experiences of aging awakening you?
2. What thoughts and feelings have made you pull the covers back over your head? Fear? Anxiety? Guilt? Shame? Depression? Grief? Something else?

GETTING RID OF ILLUSIONS

1. What illusions about life have you had that your aging experience is shattering?
2. Are you experiencing disillusionment as you try to make meaning of your life in the face of aging?

STORY: Shattering Three Grand Illusions

Our Three Grand Illusions

Immortality Invulnerability Independence

Shattering of the Three Grand Illusions

Mortality Vulnerability Interdependence

The Spiritual Fruits of the Shatterings

COURAGE COMPASSION COMMUNITY
COMFORT

*You have neat, tight expectations of what life ought to give you, but you won't get it. That isn't what life does. Life does not accommodate you, it shatters you. It is meant to, and it couldn't do it better. Every seed destroys its container or else there would be no fruition. (F. Scott-Maxwell, *The Measure of My Days*, 65)*

NEVER BEING AT THE MERCY OF ANY EVENT, THING, OR PERSON

1. Think about your life and ask yourself what continues to have you at its mercy and produces ongoing suffering:
 - a. What EVENT(S)?
 - b. What THING(S)?
 - c. What PERSON(S)?
2. How might deepening your sense of gratitude and your capacity for forgiveness enhance your life and enrich it with joyful loving of yourself, others, all of creation, and God? (Using the Ignatian Examen)

DISCOVERING THE DIAMOND MINE INSIDE YOUR SELF

1. Are you experiencing yourself as a beloved person, or do you feel you must earn and merit the respect and love of others through (a) what you can do, (b) what you have, or (c) your reputation?
2. For those who love you most dearly, what is it about you that evokes their love of you?

CONTEMPLATIO AD AMOREM

The aim of the meditation is to be aware of the gracious and abundant love of God and to respond in love, generosity, and freedom.

Ignatius asks us to pray for the grace that we desire: “an intimate knowledge of all the goods which God lovingly shares with me” and, from gratitude, to be able to respond totally “in my love and service” (SE 233).

He suggests that we recall two key ideas before beginning: first, “love is shown more in deeds than in words” (SE 230), and second, that “love consists in the mutual sharing of goods” (SE 231).

Lovers want to share of their possessions with their beloveds. So too, is the mutual gift between God and me. We give what we have, not out of obligation, but out of immense love for the other.

Suscipe (SE 234) St. Ignatius of Loyola

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.

CLOSING PRAYER - Bear me away (Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.)

*When the signs of age begin to mark my body
 (and still more when they touch my mind);
 when the ill that is to diminish me or carry me off
 strikes from without or is born within me;
 when the painful moment comes
 in which I suddenly awaken
 to the fact that I am ill or growing old;
 and above all at that last moment
 when I feel I am losing hold of myself
 and am absolutely passive within the hands
 of the great unknown forces that have formed me;
 in all those dark moments, O God,
 grant that I may understand that it is you
 (provided only my faith is strong enough)
 who are painfully parting the fibers of my being
 in order to penetrate to the very marrow
 of my substance and bear me away within yourself.*

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There are two ways of growing old. There are old people who are anxious and bitter, living in the past and illusions, who criticize everything that goes on around them. . . . But there are also old people with a child's heart, who have used their freedom from function and responsibility to find a new youth. They have the wonder of a child, but the wisdom of maturity as well. They have integrated their years of activity and so can live without being attached to power. Their freedom of heart and their acceptance of their limitations and weakness make them people whose radiance illuminates the whole community. (Jean Vanier)

AFTERWORDS (Dag Hammarskjold, Markings)

*Thanks for all that has been.
 Yes to all that will be.
 (Dag Hammarskjold, Markings)*

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Barry, S.J., William A. Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits: *Jesuit Spirituality for the Whole of Life*, January 2003, 35/1.

Barry, S.J., William A. Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits: *Past, Present, and Future*, September 2000, 32/4.

Chittister, OSB, Joan. *The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully*. BlueBridge, 2008.

DeMello, S.J., Anthony, DeMello Spirituality Center, Fordham University, <https://www.demellospirituality.com/>

Hughes, S.J., Gerard W. Is there a spirituality for the elderly? An Ignatian Approach, in Albert Jewell (Ed.) *Spirituality and Aging*, Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 14-19, 1999.

McKevitt, S.J., Gerald L. Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits: *The Gifts of Aging: Jesuit Elders in Their Own Words*, Autumn 2011, 43/3.

Morgan, Richard L. Morgan. *Remembering Your Story: Creating Your Own Spiritual Autobiography*. Upper Room Books, 2002.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. & Gaffney, Walter J. *Aging: The Fulfillment of Life*. Image Books, 1976.

Orsborn, Carol. *Older, Wiser, Fiercer: The Wisdom Collection*. Fierce with Age Press.

Rohr, OFM, Richard. *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*. Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Scott-Maxwell, Florida. *The Measure of My Days: One Woman's Vivid, Enduring Celebration of Life and Aging*. Penguin Books, 1968.

Thibault, Jane Marie. *A Deepening Love Affair: The Gift of God in Later Life*. Upper Room Books, 1993.

Thibault, Jane Marie & Morgan, Richard L. *Pilgrimage into the Last Third of Life: 7 Gateways to Spiritual Growth*. Upper Room Books, 2012.

Weber, Ph.D., Robert L. & Orsborn, Ph.D., Carol. *The Spirituality of Age: A Seeker's Guide to Growing Older*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press.

Robert L. Weber, Ph.D.

The Spirituality of Age: A Seeker's Guide to Growing Older
(coauthored with Carol Orsborn, Ph.D.)

www.SpiritualityofAge.com

bob@drbobweber.com