

# **SPIRITUALITY FOR MATURING ADULTS**

*St. Mary of the Hills Parish July, 2010 No.7*

## **THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF MATURING ADULTS**

This is a continuing series by Dr. Richard Johnson, a spiritual gerontologist. This is the fifth need.

***Grow ever closer to God in everyday events.***

When I was a young boy of five or six I had a fascination with leaves. I was more than interested in leaves; I was enthralled, even entranced by them. I remember marveling at the variability of leaves in size, shape, color, veining, and texture. I never tired of holding leaves in my hands, of seeing how the sun shone through them and lit up the veining like an X-ray. I was all but breathless in the Spring when, after the Winter rest, the trees blossomed with literally millions of leaves. *Where do they all come from?* I remember asking my parents. *Why do different trees produce different leaves?* I pondered.

All Summer I looked and wondered, viewed and mused about leaves. In the Fall of the year my wonder re-ignited into awe as all those millions of leaves began their second transformation into a panorama of mesmerizing color. How dazzling I remember those New England woods around my boyhood; I have pictures still in my mind's eye.

I wasn't aware of it then but the feelings I experienced were sprouts of spirituality emerging from the humus of my soul. I think now that I was somehow in touch with the symmetry of the universe, the whole of God, through my love affair with leaves.

What has this story to do with the fifth spiritual need of maturing adults? Just this, I believe...no, I know that there

again will come a time in my later years when I will once again hold a leaf up to the sun and marvel at God's magnificence. At that blessed moment I will discover again the majesty of God in everyday events; I will know that I am growing closer to God, and closer to my Real Self because I will once again taste the sweetness of appreciation knowing that everyday events are the most sacred.

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## **CARE FOR THE CAREGIVERS**

(from Christopher News Notes #513)

*"The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the inter-dependence of all living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved with one another."*(Thomas Merton)

It's difficult work, particularly when a loved one is dying. Here is some "Every Day advice for caregivers:

- Every day, talk with someone.
- Every day, take a break.
- Every day, exercise.
- Every day, get some rest.
- Every day, eat well.
- Every day, listen to music.
- Every day, have a moment of silence.
- Every day, let someone help.
- Every day, give yourself permission to cry...
- As long as you remember to laugh...every day.

*I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth takes its name, I pray that...He may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through His Spirit.*(Ephesians 3:14-16)

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**DO YOU KNOW A PARISHIONER WHO IS HOMEBOUND? CALL THE RECTORY 617-696-0120.**

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## DEEP SUMMER AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

(from Life's a Growin' Thing" by Hank Mattimore)

My Dad always referred to early September as the "Deep Summer". The kids are back in school. The late afternoon sun casts its long shadows on our fields, reminding us that the days are growing shorter. The smell of autumn is in the air.

At this stage of my life, summer has gone by all too fast. Like a visit from an old and dear friend, I want summer to linger. Surely it can't be time to say goodbye to ice cold lemonade and backyard barbeques and baseball and languid July afternoons that go on forever. Why, the Memorial Day weekend was just a couple of weeks ago, wasn't it? It's almost October you say? Nonsense! Someone has made a mistake.

My late Kathleen used to measure her life not by the calendar but in summers. Her sadness at the waning of another summer was palpable. "I wonder how many summers we have left?" she would say with uncharacteristic mournfulness. Death is not one of the hot topics at our social gatherings.

Still, I suspect that the sunset of another summer gives many of us pause for reflection. At least for me, it's "meaning of life" time. I take out my journal and write and think deep thoughts. I usually look up some friends I have lost contact with, give my brothers and sister a call, tell my kids I love them. Sometimes I'll get down on my knees and thank God for all the blessings in my life. For me the end of summer brings with it a desire for closure, like I need to have my house in order before the autumn winds of autumn arrive.

The Good Book says, "We have not here a lasting city." That should be pretty obvious, especially to those of us who have been around a half-century or more. Alas, we are prone to keep thoughts of our mortality at arms length. It takes the loss of a loved one or a close friend or the end of another summer to remind us that life, like the lazy days of July and August, goes by all too quickly.

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## GOD'S WHEEL

By Shel Silverstein

God says to me with kind of a smile,  
"Hey how would you like to be God for awhile  
And steer the world?"  
"Okay," says I, "I'll give it a try.  
Where do I set?  
How much do I get?  
What time is lunch?  
When can I quit?"  
"Gimme back that wheel," says God,  
"I don't think you're quite ready yet."

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### Points to ponder:

Once you know how to build bridges, you can get across lots of different rivers. (Karen Pryor)

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Muddy waters will become clear, if allowed to stand undisturbed and so too, will the mind become clear, if it is allowed to be still. (Chinese saying)