

## Aging Grace

Does the thinning buffer between us and eternity expose virtue or vice? Does aging make us better or worse? Not sure...

During this summer break—a writing one—I paused to consider the quality of my offering to others and perceived heightened gratitude and grousing. Filters falter as the years add up; the naked self is less defended (too weary to self-justify), painfully self-aware, less inclined to virtual noise, and more reliant upon Jesus. In the uneasy mix, He is the Master.

Gratitude for holy communion reoccurred over these weeks. Annette and I enjoyed each other in some relaxed expressions of intimacy; I savored her gift. She is smart and humble, inclined to offer herself fully, especially to kids and grandkids. Unlike many women who struggle to offer themselves to dependents for fear of losing 'self', Annette discovers herself in the offering. It solidifies her.

I also engaged daily with the Living Waters material which I revised over the course of these six weeks. No small task but rewarding in its own way. It meant reviewing forty years of what I see to be the core insights and practical helps in becoming a chaste offering for others, from the vantage point of one who must choose daily to carry his cross in a progressively unchaste world. How does Jesus and His members help us become whole-enough in our gendered humanity?

I was assisted by the sharp mind and ordered heart of new intern/staff person Marco Casanova; I'd not experienced that kind of partnership in a writing project before. I enjoyed the refinement and know it made the revision better. The new guidebook will gleam by next spring (2020), just in time for DSM's 40th Anniversary. We celebrate that milestone in Kansas City, August 7th-9th.

Ok. Good stuff all. But amid the holy communion came disturbing glimpses of unholiness, my own haggard responses to our tilting world. I refer not only to the earthquakes shaking the globe but also the dirty breath of public opinion that fan sparks into holocausts. Everyone has an opinion, even when they expose only their ignorance, proudly spewed all over the Internet. Narcissistic waste.

Why such little awareness of one's limits? Why not the humility to pray instead of pontificate? Passion without mercy!

I am as merciless as the objects of my disgust. I fan into flame intolerance and become grossly impatient, enraged by human folly, especially the follies of Christians who should stick with what they know rather than amplify what they don't in order to build followings. My discontent tempts me to check out, to disengage and do sick unchaste stuff. Aging has made me worse. And wiser. I know better now and my will is sure. I opt for holy communion: my wife, my friends, local Living Waters group, Holy Church. Can't get saved online. I need Jesus in the flesh.

I spent a lot of time this break in Adoration, sitting before Jesus in a nearby prayer chapel, content to just be with Him. To Him I brought all the delightful, disturbing things that flare up within me. I accept their ferocity, in the light of His love for me. He seems nearer, more clear, rich in mercy and fierce in holiness. He becomes the one true thing I need more now than yesterday. Aging may have worsened me but has inclined me more to Him. I get better only in the light of His love for me. His light shines brighter now.

‘And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light’ (Rom. 13: 11, 12).

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