



What do you want to be when you grow up?

Growing old entails an alarming passivity of letting gravity pull us downward as life reverses polarity. We let go of what we have acquired materially, socially, and physically. We lose the ability to walk, to see, to hear, to think clearly and to interact in a rapidly changing world. We learn to live with chronic pain and become dependent on pills to bolster failing organs. Each year brings further deterioration and more limitations. Maturing is losing things we have outgrown. We now lose things we haven't outgrown -- things we need to sustain our lives. In *Aging as a Spiritual Journey*, Eugene Bianchi, a specialist on the spirituality of aging, bluntly states that we must "enter the experience of the sands slipping away in the hourglass of our lives. This discomforting feeling of the unstoppable dimming of the light, the numbering of our breaths, must be embraced until it hurts."

Our culture ties our sense of worth to our independence. Who are we now that we do not plan our days and drive to our appointments, now that we can't prepare our own meals or balance our checkbooks? Who are we now that we've given up our privacy as we're helped to dress, take our pills, and get to the doctor?

With startling clarity, we now see that we've never been self-sufficient at any time in our lives. We've always depended upon others for our existence. Our sense of autonomous existence, our sense of control, were mere illusions. As our body deteriorates, we're invited to detach from anger and self-righteousness, fear and denial, pride and pretense that hide our vulnerability. These are our last days to let go of bitterness, to forgive the past, and to be made whole. Our old wounds and painful memories can finally heal as we see the past anew. If we become more accepting of our shadow self (Jungian term for our self we do not readily see) we can enter a new compassion for others. If we choose to not name, mourn and let go of our losses, they mold inside. Our fear, displeasure, and disgust for those aspects of our selves and our past lives erupt outward to poison others. We become stiff and unbending, endlessly complaining, and vainly trying to control the uncontrollable.

Perhaps in these days, the sacred love in which we are created flames its brightest, lighting up the darkness of our failing vision and this last long winter night. We learn to see by a different light now, one that isn't so earthbound and dependent on our physical state. Perhaps we begin to live more from our "created in the image of God" center. Our frail bodies and wrinkled skin, our brittle bones and rheumy eyes belie the deep beauty and burning fire that cannot be housed in a youthful body. As we approach our true home from whence we came, we learn to see that we've always been home. Until now, we couldn't see as clearly. Now we know.

I Cor. 13:12-13, "Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."



Phil. 3:12-14, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Paul wrote this while in prison)

Phil 1:21, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

What are the losses you or your loved one struggled with?	Have you found any consolation or gifts after your loss?	How can we press on when our sufferings limit us?

"The Son of God suffered unto death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like his." George MacDonald

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