
Aging and Spirituality

I recently attended an International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality, in Canberra that the company I worked for was sponsoring. I noticed I was among the youngest there (being 53 at the time) and I was inspired to see how many people in their 70's and 80's were and still are involved in research, publishing and presentations.

I was challenged to think about things I hadn't considered before and as Bro Dennis Gillett said, *"I cling tenaciously to the belief that I am normal"*, so perhaps you haven't given any thought to some of these things either.

- *Nearing Home* quote which caught my attention:

"No one has ever taught me how to live when I'm old, before I die. I wish they had."

- Is there a spiritual component to frailty? - that is, do we only get physically frail or also spiritually?
- Is there beauty in frailty and old age?
- Is the last part of our life as important as any other part of the life journey? Why or why not?
- What are the spiritual tasks of ageing?
- Do I resent/fear getting older?

"Don't resent growing old. Many are denied the opportunity"

(Irish proverb)

Here are some of the fears you may have thought of around getting old:

- physical limitations
 - loss of control/choices
 - reduced cognition
 - reduced financial resources
 - death of peers
 - loneliness/death of spouse
 - being invisible
 - 'I don't belong here anymore'
 - physical appearance: hearing aids/glasses/walking stick
 - losing joy/happiness
 - overwhelming technology you don't understand/can't use
 - terminology you don't understand
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- Loss of connectedness – family and friends/ecclesia
- Discrimination – being treated like I’m stupid
- Doubt of self
- Are the best days over?
- How long have I got?
- Being a burden
- Pain
- Being dependent on others
- Fear of death

Not a pretty picture. But what does God say? How does He comfort us? Isaiah 46:6

Even to your old age, I am He, and even to grey hairs I will carry you!

I have made and I will bear; Even I will carry, and will deliver you.



Cathy Strachan