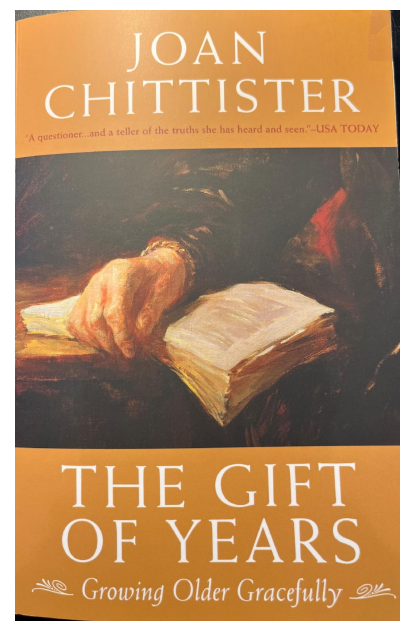


FAITH matters

February 6, 2023

When I Grow Up

I think it is safe to assume most of the readers of *Faith Matters* are “of a certain age”. Truth to tell, most of us are retired. One of my dear long-time friends is Don Lichtenfelt, a retired pastor who just turned 90. He sent me a book which has been a valued companion for him in recent years and as I began reading it, I understood why. It’s Joan Chittister’s beautiful book ***The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully***.



Chittister says she recently turned 70 so she is writing about “this time in life for which there is no career plan.” She says, *“It is time for us to let go of both our fantasies of eternal youth and our fears of getting older, and to find the beauty of what it means to age well. It is a time to understand that the last phase of life is not non-life, it is a new stage in life. It is not to simply endure the coming of the end of time. It is to come alive in ways I have never been alive before.”*

I found myself underlining something on every page. Page after page...like this: *“The truth is older people come in two flavors—the sour ones and the serene ones. The serene ones live with soft smiles on their aging faces, a welcome sign to the world of what it means to grow older gracefully.”* And I found myself thinking,

“Those are the kinds of folks I know, the kind of folks I run around with, the kind of folks who make up the congregation at St. Andrews—people who have learned how to grow older gracefully.

One of my more cynical friends said, “Bobby Browning was talking great nonsense when he said, “Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be” and in some ways, of course, he is right. Getting old isn’t for sissies. But along with the burdens can come great blessings if we open ourselves to them. My 90-year old preacher friend Don has learned that, and obviously lots of folks around here have too.

It makes me think, “That’s what I’d like to be like when I grow up.”

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all,
nor be afraid!" --Robert Browning

And obviously, on the journey to aging gracefully, faith really does matter.

~Written by Rev. John E. Harnish



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