
Calling on the Spirit, as We Age, in Unsettling Times

An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Canon Carolynne Williams



The biologist says this about aging: “In all organisms which age, aging expresses itself as an increased ability to die with the passage of time” (Alex Comfort, *A Good Age*, pg. 71). There are diseases of age which can be palliated by skilled medical treatment and by such less popular maneuvers as treating older folks decently and having enough money to live on.

Golda Meir, at age 75, after retiring from serving as Israel's Prime Minister, was asked to head a committee to rejuvenate the Labor party. Frank Lloyd Wright, America's greatest architect, began his most creative and prolific work at the age of 69. It began from the innovative house, Falling Water, in Bear Run, Pennsylvania, and continued with New York's circular Guggenheim Museum, with its curving inner ramp and tilting walls. The Guggenheim was completed in 1959, the year Wright died at the age of 91.

What is the point? We, all people, age in one of two ways. Galatians 5:16-22 gives us a great description of them: living by the spirit or living by the flesh. They are both clear suggestions and, of course, we have a choice. “Live by the spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:22)

One of the beauties of aging with grace is that there are all types of possibilities and opportunities for fine-tuning ourselves. We can upgrade where we desire to upgrade; we can make choices that enhance our spirit, our way of being. We can upgrade by changing our mind, changing our heart, if it has been hardened, and we can, with hope, be transformed.

As we age, the spirit, our inner being, seems to permit and make allowances and space within us. The spirit, that inner being, assists in giving each of us an opportunity to look at ourselves, from our hearts. It seems to happen as we become more self-aware. When we are open to it, a belief, through our faith, in our creator being present within us makes the changes that we eventually recognize and accept.

But when we have expectations about aging and those expectations are not aligned with what is actually taking place within us, spiritually and physically, we become unsettled. When we turn to look at the world around us and we see the constant

movement and action, we may or may not carry anxiety. The goal for many is to sustain our daily routines and return to who we are, really, with best practices and devotion to God 's presence in our lives.

Each day we begin again and again. We are summoned to do the work we have been called to do and in the very doing of the work we find a sense of human spirit, human life, human community at its fullest and its best. "We look for God's 'Most Holy Spirit' to rule our human hearts in ways that will bring us all to a fuller comprehension of it and make it newly available in the life of this age." (L. William Countryman, *Calling on the Spirit in Unsettling Times*, pg. 17)

The Lord does not disappoint those who take the walk of aging with grace, walking with love, hospitality. Take the risk: seek out God's son, through the spirit, and you will see he's already there, especially in unsettling times.