

OLD AGE

John Paul Speaks

*Notable quotations from Pope John Paul II and
official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church*

“I PROCLAIM YOUR WONDROUS DEEDS”

With the Psalmist, I say ...: “You have taught me, O God, from my youth, and till the present I proclaim Your wondrous deeds. And now that I am old and gray, O God, forsake me not, till I proclaim Your strength to every generation that is to come” (Ps 71: 17-18). (1)

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

The passage of time helps us to see our experiences in a clearer light and softens their painful side... Experience teaches that daily difficulties, by God’s grace, often contribute to people’s growth and to the forging of their character. (2)

“A HOPE THAT DOES NOT DISAPPOINT”

If the life of each of us is limited and fragile, we are consoled by the thought that, by virtue of our spiritual souls, we will survive beyond death itself. Moreover, faith opens us to a “hope that does not disappoint” (cf. Rom 5:5). (2)

“TIME IS A GREAT TEACHER”

Old age is not without its own benefits. As St. Jerome observes, with the quieting of the passions, it “increases wisdom, and brings more mature counsels.” In a certain sense it is the season for that wisdom which generally comes from experience, since “time is a great teacher.” (5)

“A SIGN OF DIVINE FAVOR”

In the Word of God, old age is so highly esteemed that long life is seen as a sign of divine favor (cf. Gen 11: 10-32). (6)

OLD AGE AND THE BIBLE

The teaching and language of the Bible present old age as a “favorable time” for bringing life to its fulfillment and, in God’s plan for each person, as a time when everything comes together and enables us better to grasp life’s meaning and to attain “wisdom of heart.” (8)

“ALL THE MORE PRECIOUS”

How many people find understanding and comfort from elderly people who may be lonely or ill and yet are able to instill courage by their loving advice, their silent prayers, or their witness of suffering borne with patient acceptance! At the very time when their physical energies and their level of activity are decreasing, these brothers and sisters of ours become all the more precious in the mysterious plan of providence. (13)

“WHEN GOD PERMITS US TO SUFFER ...”

When God permits us to suffer because of illness, loneliness or other reasons associated with old age, He always gives us the grace and strength to unite ourselves with greater love to the sacrifice of His Son and to share ever more fully in His plan of salvation. Let us be convinced of this: He is our Father, a Father rich in love and mercy! (13)

“THE CHURCH STILL NEEDS YOU”

The Church still needs you. She appreciates the services which you may wish to provide in many areas of the apostolate; she counts on the support of your longer periods of prayer; she counts on your advice born of experience, and she is enriched by your daily witness to the Gospel. (13)

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