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Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

Old Age in a Twilight of Idols



“Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life; And if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in

thy strength: for the relieving of the father shall not be forgotten. Despise not a man in his old age; for we also shall become old.” (Ecclesiasticus 3.14, 8.7)

We live in a society that idolizes, apotheosizes, youth to the point of

obsession. It is nothing less than idolatry, and the idol chosen — the young man, the young woman — is a poor substitute for God, being at best the mere image of God ... an image concealed beneath thin superficialities, obscured by cosmetics and disfigured by scalpels. This empty, designer world, has called all ages to its feet to fill them with self-loathing and spurious shame ... until they conform to the “model” that some effete and lecherous mogul holds up to them as the ideal ... the ideal that to fall short of is shame. And for the few who starve themselves sufficiently, purge themselves through vomitus and laxatives, who pay great sums and travel great distances in some empty hope of fame and fortune, or at the siren call of “youth”, the reward is ... exploitation! Body, dignity, wallet, all three.

How did we end up in this sad state of affairs? Is this the patrimony we pass onto our children: if you are not comely, you are worthless. If your body does not fit some arbitrary parameters it, too, is worthless. When your skin loses the glow of

youth and acquires the patina of maturity, you fall by the side. Life exists in a small and ever so brief window between the blemishes of adolescence and the first lines of wisdom. After the one and before the other, there is no life — and if you never fell into those biometrics, those increasingly diminutive parameters dubbed “beauty” — you never had a life to begin with and never will.

An instant, a misstep, a fall, an accident, an illness ... and your life vanishes in an instant and you are consigned to lesser forms of life. Right?

If you're the Mogul of Models, the Purveyor of False Youth, and can make a fortune off false promises ... then yes. To you it is.

It is not, however, the case for every father, every mother of every child, of every man, every woman who walks the face of this earth. They see beauty. They see something more than a pound of flesh in a child, a person. And the child sees something more than a biometrical model in her mother, in his father — who surrendered so much of their own youth for their children. What grandchild has not found something more beautiful in the breath of eternity surrounding a grandmother holding them dearly in love ... something of far greater beauty still than a youth that has long passed?

Because we have lost our sense of God, of the holy and good, we distance ourselves frantically from death and fixate ourselves on youth. Who has not felt a pang of sadness in his heart upon seeing a woman clinging to youth that has gone, oblivious to any beauty within herself. Instead of acquiring character, they have opted for a caricature. The world has done this to them every bit as it does it to our children, and both are tragic, for both have been robbed of dignity.

We have become idolaters of ourselves, humankind is becoming increasingly self-centered, self-absorbed, and it is at a great cost and loss.

For most people today, their body is the main focal point of their lives — at the expense of the mind and soul. What an unprofitable and foolish trade! One endures. One does not. One grows in beauty, and one diminishes.

Worse still, countless numbers of us are suffering from spiritual anorexia: we are starved of that which will give us health and life, the Gospel of Christ, the Lord Jesus Himself in the Bread of Angels!

What a great disservice we do our children in our constant attentiveness to

ourselves! We are cheating our children, denying them that necessary example of growing old with grace and into God — a path that they, too, must walk one day!

No Elixir of Life — only the Word of Life

Instead of our vanity and fetish-of-the-flesh, we should be passing on to our children our own wisdom and experience of life, and that which will in turn help them to choose rightly in their own lives.

It does not take extraordinary acumen to see how miserably we are failing. How often the elderly and aging are relegated to the the margins of our lives, instead of revered and honored. In our breathless pursuit of youth, of physical beauty, of notability in the world, we have no time for them. After all, “it’s our time now! They had theirs.” To our great misfortune, we shall hear these words from the mouths of our own children —d age does nothing to assist those now on the threshold of it. If you are not there yet, you soon will be ...

Most of us will eventually grow to experience old age, and it will not be of our choosing. No false promise, no “miraculous” elixir, no great stride in science — not even the most competent cosmetologists — can stave it off.

God intends that our old age should be the richest, perhaps even the most productive time of our lives, the time when the ugly accretions of the world and its superficiality fall away and we become transparent vessels of the love of God that others may see something much more clearly of Him in us, and through us be drawn to Him.

It is actually a time for the spiritual harvest of our souls, a harvest that we can freely share with others, having borne much fruit and in great abundance. We are then the “Fields white to harvest.”

Let us take time to see what message are we passing down to the next generation.

Let us re-examine our *own* attitude to aging — and see where, with Gods grace, we can change and grow in such a way that we may support and help others along every path in life, from the most innocent in the womb, to the most vulnerable outside it.

Look with love deeply into the eyes of an old person: he or she has born the heat of the day, and has passed through much trial and suffering life. if you look with love you will see a depth of great beauty, a mirror of eternity, you will look into the

eyes of a soul soon to close its own ... only to re-open them upon the very face of
God!

A Poor Clare Colettine Nun

for the Boston Catholic Journal



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