

# ALL SAINTS PARISH

## Sharing Our Journey

Sunday March 14, 2010

### 15 Reflections on the End of Life

Gathered from Eugene C. Bianchi's landmark book

Aging as a Spiritual Journey

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#### 1. Reconcile impending death. (Charity)

***“Now, the question is how much more is there to be done that I could do.”***

#### Prayer for Charity

*Let me discover your charity today dear Lord, to give and expect nothing in return.*

Charity reminds me that your abundance Lord is not just all the giftedness that I think of as “good,” but all the rest as well, even, and perhaps particularly those things that I consider quite the opposite of good. Help me today, Lord, by your unconditional goodwill of charity, to accept every part of your abundance, all the parts that I like, as well as those ending parts that I wouldn't choose but which I know are necessary for my journey back to you. Send me your strength of charity today so that I can learn how to love better by shedding encumbrances of mind and spirit that have prevented me from living and loving fully, especially now with what I know is ahead of me. AMEN.

#### 2. Loss of friends and family. (Adaptability)

***“I have had now over the last ten years a steady succession of close personal friends fall away, and every one has been a substantive loss to my own selfhood.”***

#### Prayer for Adaptability

*Adaptability is essential spiritual growth, without it I am doomed to remain the same.*

I embrace your love Lord, knowing that you expect me to change. My only job today is to learn how to love better than I did yesterday. Learning how to love better requires your adaptability dear Lord. I am empowered by your gift that allows me to shift my view as I grow in love. Adaptability is essential for spiritual growth, for the flexibility to grow toward you. Adaptability propels me to see the light of God's ways operating in me and not be blindly tricked into adopting the ways of the world, especially now when the stakes

are high. I can adjust myself toward your Lord, I can be malleable in your hands; I can bend toward your ways and away from the ways of the world. AMEN

3. Fear of losing mental capacities. (Steadfast)

***“I do not see how to ensure a graceful exit.”***

Prayer for Steadfastness

*I find my firmness and determination only in you.*

Lord, you are my anchor. I know that you are with me forever. What better thought can there be than this? You fix me in place, but I am not stuck at all, rather this “fixing” paradoxically allows me to be free to think with the surety of love and the confidence of your Spirit, the wellspring of all grace. I move only in you dear Lord, and while I move closer to you I also know that this movement brings me to the center of all healing, all power and might. I find my firmness and determination only in you. You are unfaltering, and by extension I am also. Your light of purposefulness brightens my soul and brings me to the gates of healing. In you I am sure. AMEN

4. Fear of death and fear of living an unfulfilled life. (Humility)

***“Fear that the gifts that God has put into your hands you have not used well.”***

Prayer for Humility

*Today I am free from confusion about who I am, because I now know who I am.*

I dedicate myself to do and to be your will. I seek to be nothing other than what I authentically am. Humility calls me to be real, to claim my brokenness but also to claim my strengths equally. Help me not to forget that I am gifted, and that your gifts sustain me even along this sometimes lonely journey. I am first and foremost your child Lord; all else is meager and transitory, only time-limited roles I play here on this plane, which one day will be over. Only you define my real self, Lord, and humility calls me to honor that real self as the only true definition of me. I have lived in this world to discover the truest reality of me, the love you have invested in me. In your humility I am free from worry and confusion about who I am, because I now know who I am, and where I am going ... back to you. AMEN.

5. A strong sense of responsibility to use their talents well. (Kindness)

***“I’m not afraid to die ... but, I am ashamed to die ... all those opportunities for increased grace that I allowed to pass unfulfilled.”***

## Prayer for Kindness

*You call me to be kind, to be gentle, affectionate, and loving.*

Lord, today help me learn your ways of kindness. Help me stay focused on the light of your grace, and not slide over to darkness; help me let your healing light shine onto my brokenness. You call me to be kind, to demonstrate gentle, affectionate, and loving behaviors; help me carry this out with a special understanding that my days are numbered. Your call to kindness is not reserved for others; let me not forget to be kind to myself as well. Help me accept everything and everyone, including myself, as gifts from you that deserve my sacred care. Help me to render care where it is needed, friendship where it's called for, and help where it's most required. Let me do all of this with respect and courteous goodwill. AMEN.

6. Having one's worldly affairs in order. (Harmony)

***“And I say other things about provisions that I've made for them and hopes that I have for them.”***

## Prayer for Harmony

*Help me shape my goals so they all point to living in sync with you.*

In you Lord every promise is made real. Your advancing light creates an eager readiness in me to receive you anew Lord. You are my companion; your light guides me and illuminates my path. Help me find solace in you as the central principle of my life. Give me the internal harmony so that peace can grow verdantly at my core, now and at the hour of my death. Help me shape my goals so they all point to living in sync with you now and beyond. AMEN

7. Contemplation of death can be cause for a fuller appreciation for life. (Gratitude)

***“When I think about death and reflect on it, it acts as a means of reminding me; ‘Let's get going here’.”***

## Prayer for Gratitude

*The light of gratitude pulsates in praise as it makes its rounds through me.*

I want to live in profound thankfulness for every day Lord. I bow my head and bend my knee; without you I can do nothing. My very personality is animated only by your power, your gifts Lord. Today is a day of 'thank you,' a day of tribute to you. The light of gratitude pulsates in praise as it makes its rounds through me searching for, and eliminating any misguided emotions that could pull me away from you. Let me always

remember how indebted I am to you Lord; you know all about me and know particularly what I need now in my life. I praise your name all the days to the end of my life, and forever. AMEN

8. Death ...seen as a quest to be free. (Wisdom)

***“I would like to be able to so live each day as to welcome new experiences, to drop my old angers, to drop my compulsiveness and passivity toward formal projects and say, ‘This is a new day’.”***

Prayer for Wisdom

*Let me join my mind with your mind dear Lord.*

Dear Lord, animate me with your wisdom as I walk this path. Saturate my thoughts with your highest purpose. Allow me to let go of all unnecessary thoughts that only clutter my mind and bring it to insufficiency. Let me use the knowledge that flows from you as the basis for my thinking, dear Lord. Let me discover and use your thoughts, so that I can discern the “right meaning” from the events now unfolding in my life. Let me join my mind with your mind so that in this sublime alignment I can find your uplifting unity of thought that gives me confidence, good cheer, and healing of my brokenness. Let me read in your book of wisdom and find the way you would have me walk to today, and every day to the end of my days. AMEN.

9. The vital polarity: Trembling before death vs. Trust in God. (Transcendence)

***“This leads me to believe that death may be another door. I can’t think of it as a stopping of life and of fellowship, but rather a continuing.”***

Prayer for Transcendence

*Today I move beyond the realm of simply “doing” and enter the realm of “being,”*

Lord, show me the way to your love that resides in my personality. Preparation for the next transition requires that I join with you in making decisions from your reality, dear Lord, the most real reality there is. Today I move beyond the realm of simply “doing” and enter the realm of “being,” joining the worldly and the spiritual levels of me. I want to join my will with your Will dear Lord. As I do, I find that I become fundamentally changed, I am transformed; I go beyond the material plane and begin walking the outer lawns of your plane. I am both here on this earth, and also with you at the same time. Your transcendence in me causes a core shift in me, a shift toward you. AMEN.

10. Profound trust in God. (Trust)

***“My son knew that the father who he saw in the light, and whose hand he held in the dark, would not change because the circumstances had changed.”***

Prayer for Trust

*I wish to fall into you, because you are enough for all my needs today Lord.*

I am confident of your care all day long. The strength of my feelings gives me an assured knowing of your love for me. Today, I trust. Thank you for illuminating my emotions out of the darkness of seeking security in this world, a place where there is no certainty, to the only true security that exists in you. I cannot trust in me or in anything else; there are no guarantees except you Lord. Your universal love is my sure light that takes away the darkness of my brokenness. I have no doubt that your promise of abundance is being fulfilled even now, as always. In absolute assurance I give my life over to you now and at the hour of my death. AMEN.

11. Confidence in God’s providence. (Faith)

***“Death is neither friend nor foe, but simply God’s way of bringing to be and passing on, whatever is provided by His providence.”***

Prayer for Faith

*In the debris of my thoughts I find solace on the solid rock of the grace of faith.*

Something heavy pulls at my heart. This unnamed intruder tugs at my mood dragging it down. Where it came from is a mystery. Amongst the debris of my fragmented thoughts I find solace only on the solid rock of the grace of faith. It’s here in this place of fidelity where I know without question that your guiding hand brings me back to my center. It’s here where I stand on holy ground that settles my irritated mind and calms my thoughts. You are my loyalty, dear Lord; you are my conviction; in you I find rest. My brokenness only makes my faith stronger. The light of your grace of faith penetrates deep to every part of me, searching out any broken thoughts and replacing them with firmness and confidence. AMEN.

12. God has walked with me so far. (Courage)

***“I am in accord with what God would with me.  
I am not afraid of death. I am afraid of pain.”***

Prayer for Courage

*You call me to address my brokenness with resilience and hardiness.*

The morning light reminds me of the internal fortitude that you have given me; indeed you have planted your courage in me. You call me to address my brokenness with resilience and hardiness, to hold out against its attacks ... to be as tenacious as a bulldog. Your grace gives me firmness of mind and the courage to venture forth even in the face of danger. You make all things new Lord, and today I become new in your courage; you make me dauntless Lord. My brokenness is an echo that one day I'm leaving this earth and journeying closer to you, part of my healing is to remember this unalterable fact. Lord, make me resolute and bold; give me spiritual spunk to meet the foe that surrounds me. AMEN.

13. A mystic sense that something spiritual is happening.

***“I was working there in my garden and I had an experience.  
I had the experience of my identity with everything there is ...”***

#### Prayer for Inspiration

*Let my actions today be a testimony to your wonder working power in my soul.*

Dear Lord, infuse me with the light of your inspiration as I contemplate new transitions in my life. Illuminate my actions, and help me become ever more aware of your presence in everything that I do. Grant me the gift of inspiration to guide my hands and feet, so that I can be about your business. Motivate me with your inaudible yet clear voice, and let me be the true inspired “me” as I move through this day. Touch me with your mighty mechanisms of care, so that my actions reflect your healing power. Help me to let-go of any sadness that doggedly clings to my mind, so that I can be free to be with you, and to act as you would have me act, now and at the hour of my death. AMEN.

14. Death should not kill us before we die. (Joy)

***“But it should not ... paralyze our use of the opportunity for joy, or meditation, of being with one another, of thinking, or reading and seeing colors each day that we have.”***

#### Prayer for Joyfulness

*I am filled with awe and wonder; I'm bursting with your joy.*

Oh Lord I know that you are here with me still, and you always will be. I wish to live fully in your happiness of heart. Your grace of joy sustains me and sends my heart into elation. I am so filled with awe and wonder; I'm bursting with your joy. Even when this world weighs heavily upon me; even when the specter of loss pushes and prods me, attacks me, and disappoints me, even in these dark times my heart remains joyful knowing that you heal my brokenness. Joyfulness is your holy light in me that leads me away from

emotional turmoil. Joy conquers the world by lifting my spirits beyond the cares of the world and resting them gently in your hands. AMEN.

15. Celebrate life. (Hope)

***“And I think you come more and more to have a sense of the celebration of the life that has been and is, rather than thinking too much about the loss.”***

### Prayer for Hope

*The splendor of the virtue of hope lights my way and leads me to you today.*

God, I know that you are the architect of my soul. You chose to place the power of hope in me, and I know that you expect me to be a whole fragment of your hope for the world. I know that I am most happy, healthy, and holy when I'm in love with you in hope. Let me celebrate with the enthusiasm and optimism that flows only from your hope. The splendor of the virtue of hope lights my way and leads me to you today, and in that journey I know I will find healing for my brokenness. Propelled by your gift of hope I have absolute assurance that your power of love can never be eclipsed; there is no power in the universe stronger than your love. I know without question that your love will always remain the compelling power in the cosmos, now and at the hour of my death. AMEN

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Bianchi, Eugene C. Aging as a Spiritual Journey, Crossroads, New York, 1992.