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Retirement: An Invitation to Transformation



November 17, 2015
Paula Cooney, IHM, MA

For Today:

- Context: USA / Congregation / Personal
- Change / Phases of Transitions
- Retirement and Aging
- The Invitation

USA

- ▶ Attitude
 - ▶ Commercial Version –
 - ▶ Retirement Communities
 - ▶ Images
- ▶ Health Plans –
- ▶ Insurance Policies –
- ▶ Retirement Plans – 401K – SS
- ▶ Anything missing???



Religious Congregations

In Our Documents:

- ▶ We believe retirement can be a time of blessing and opportunity for the entire community and for each individual member
 - ▶ A time to deepen and grow spiritually
 - ▶ A time to develop and deepen relationships
 - ▶ A time to explore something new
 - ▶ A time for leisure AND a time to do justice

What We Say To Ourselves And One Another:

- We don't retire – we just get recycled
- I'll retire only when I can no longer do the job / need supportive services
- I have to hang in – my community needs the money
- Who will I BE?
- Will my community be there for me?

Personal Landscape

- ❖ What else is going on ?
- ❖ How did THIS change come about?
 - ❖ A Process?
 - ❖ Anticipated / Planned for?
 - ❖ Out of the blue?
- ❖ What Questions/ Feelings are surfacing?

Change and Transition – Not the Same!

▶ **Change:** a tangible, sometimes physical, situational EVENT that occurs at a certain point in time.

INITIATES transition

▶ **Transition:** a psychological and spiritual PROCESS through which we INTERNALIZE and come to terms with the new situation that the change brings so as to make it our own.

Phases of Transition

- ▶ Endings
- ▶ Neutral Zone
- ▶ Beginnings



ENDINGS / LETTING GO Disengagement:

A moving away

- ❖ keys and name tags are turned in
- ❖ lose access to the company e-mail / name taking off mail box
- ❖ no longer 'in the know'
- ❖ the relationships that were your daily fare are no longer

Disidentification

- ❖ your calendar no longer has dates connected with your work
- ❖ your daily routine is disrupted
- ❖ your 'self' becomes disconnected from this anchor of identity
- ❖ you are no longer introduced by your role



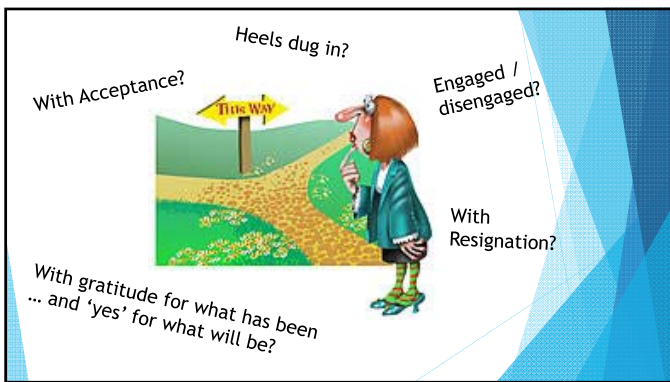
Disenchantment

Begin to see that there are things you thought were so but are not as you thought.

Disorientation

What was important to you yesterday isn't important to you now –

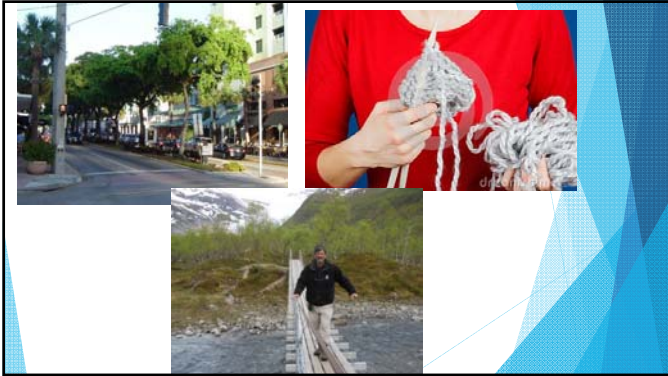
You are no longer THERE!
And
You're not quite HERE either!



Neutral Zone

- ▶ Time of surrender
- ▶ Paschal Mystery
- ▶ Disintegration / reintegration
- ▶ Perspective

- ▶ BREATHE



Negotiating the 'not yet' time

- ▶ Noticing what is happening – inside – be interested not judgmental
- ▶ A regular time to be alone
- ▶ Write an autobiography
- ▶ Find Companions on the Journey
- ▶ Discover what you really want / what do you want to make room for
- ▶ And ...

Beginnings - Is a Process as Well!

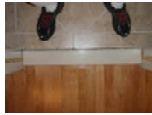
- ▶ It's a challenge to change patterns!!!
(The old – known way – safety!
- ▶ Stop getting ready and ACT! - It takes practice!
- ▶ Begin to see yourself actually living the new beginning!
- ▶ Take it step by step – pay attention – learn



Beginnings: Self Check

Is it REALLY a beginning?
What do those who know you well see?

- Have you negotiated the neutral zone and found a new way of being
- OR
- Are you avoiding the work of letting go?



Attitudes toward Retirement are impacted by our attitudes about Aging

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"Every day I walk for 30 minutes, I drink 8 glasses of water, and I eat 5 fruits and vegetables... BUT I'M STILL GETTING OLDER!"

VERBS not States of Being

Elder-ing
Age-ing



'The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are.

At age 60, I set forth to learn and manifest what was valuable and meaningful for me at this juncture , to learn to be real, to pursue my truth as the unique and universal self I understood to be bequeathed to me...'

Joseph Campbell

THERE IS A SEASON

- ▶ A time of growing into wisdom, wholeness, authenticity
- ▶ A time to finish the task of finishing ourselves
- ▶ A time to embrace sorrow – and to savor blessedness
- ▶ A time to nurture intimacy / delight in connectedness
- ▶ A time to give yourself to others
- ▶ A time to seek forgiveness – and to forgive
- ▶ A time to take on the mystery
- ▶ A time to live in the NOW -

Decisions come from where you stand

- in your beliefs / values
- in your perceptions
- from your lived experience

What DO YOU believe about aging
–
Particularly your own?

Do I Believe:

- that **I** am a creative act of a loving God, possessing inherent dignity and value?
- that **MY** life is a gift holding promise and potential in each of its developmental stages?
- that **MY** retirement is a call to live life fully?
- that **MY** aging is gift?

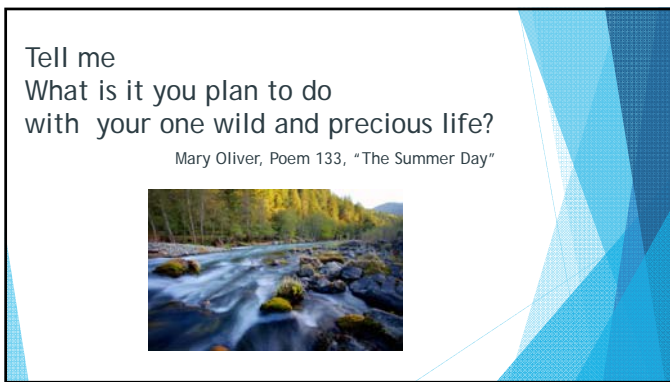
Conversion

- ▶ Honest discernment of what is
- ▶ Exploration of what could be
- ▶ Commitment to new understandings, values and way of life

“While in one way retirement may mean stepping out of formal ministry, in a much more important sense it is stepping into a deeply transformative experience. It is the epitome of ongoing formation.”

Sr. Nancy Schreck, OSF







Suggested Resources

- ▶ Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes, William Bridges, PhD, 1980.
- ▶ The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully, Joan Chittister, 2008.
- ▶ A Time To Live: Seven Steps of Creative Aging, Robert Raines, 1997.
- ▶ The 12 Keys to Spiritual Vitality: Powerful Lessons in Living Agelessly, Richard P. Johnson, Ph.D., 1998.
- ▶ Issues of Engaging Aging available from NRRO.
- ▶ Paula Cooney, IHM, MA - pcooney@ihmsisters.org

Upcoming events:

Next RFC Webinar: Friday, January 29, 2016 3:00 pm EST



Presenter: Fr. Brad Milunski, OFM Conv.

Topic: Hearing God's Prophetic Call:
A Model for Initial and Lifelong Formation



Photo: Amaguet, Obadiah

Next NRRO Webinar: February 16, 2016 1:00 pm EST
Speaker and topic to be announced.
Please check with NRRO