Insane for the Light: Spirituality for our Wisdom Years

Oblate School of Theology
5th Annual International Retreat
February 25 – March 1st, 2018

Ron Rolheiser OMI
Part Three - Moving toward Wisdom
The Psychological and Spiritual Challenges of Late Generativity

• “There’s a crack in everything and that’s how the light gets in.” Leonard Cohen

• “The cock will crow at the cracking of your ego. There are different ways to wake up in this world.” John Shea
A. An Image from Richard Rohr –

The concept of “the holy old fool” – Our three options as we age

i) Being a “pathetic old fool”

ii) Being an “angry old fool”

iii) Being a “holy old fool”
B. Aging into Wisdom

a. The need to start “early”- Advice from an Elder

b. “We don’t become angry in our old age”
C. The psychological and spiritual tasks of mid-life – Dealing with the “drama of the gifted child” – Alice Miller

- The drama - the task of mid-life and beyond
  - grieving, reconciliation, forgiveness.
D. The Spiritual tasks … moving towards

- Fruitfulness as replacing Achievement
- Gratitude
  - A counsel from Morris West
  - The ultimate virtue underlying all love and virtue
  - The Eucharistic words of Jesus
  - A Jewish parable
• Forgiveness
  o A story – Frank McCourt and Andrew Greeley
  o The key to gratitude
  o A contemporary illustration - The Shack

• Faith
  o Faith as moving beyond images, icons, imagination, a journey in mystery
  o Faith as patience with God.
  o The task in aging – John of the Cross – “Learn to understand more by not understanding than by understanding.”
• Hope
  o Hope as distinct from wishful thinking and temperamental optimism.
  o Hope as living within a “meta-narrative”
    □ Teilhard
    □ Pierre Olivier Trembley
    □ Archbishop Tutu
    □ William Stringfellow
    □ Hans Urs Von Baltasar
    □ Jim Wallis – “Hope isn’t based upon the evidence; hope is trusting the gospel and watching the evidence change.”
• **Childlikeness**

  o Jesus on why children enter the kingdom.
  o Jesus and the invitation to go back to that time “before our hardness of heart”.
  o Paul Ricoeur – The invitation to “second naiveté”, post-sophistication, post-liberal.
  o Conservatives and liberals struggling equally, but differently, with “childlikeness”.

• **Surrender**

  o Richard Rohr – our ultimate and final invitation
  o Kathleen Dowling Singh – on the final stages of dying
  o Jesus’ death of the Cross
  o The invitation to make this a progressive movement as we age.
• **A Contemplative Practice**
  
  o Jesus as paradigm in Luke’s Gospel

• **Community**
  
  o Keep grounded inside of family, community, and church - remaining inside “schools of charity” that keep you de-fantasized, grounded, and sane.
• **Perseverance-Fidelity as a form of “obedience”**
  
  o Put yourself under obedience so as to live beyond the ego with its myriad needs, wounds, indignations, and inflations
  
  o Accept the non-negotiables of life and faith
    - *Life is hard and sometimes you will have to live with pain and with unresolved tension*
    - *You will make mistakes, sin, hurt others, and stand in need of forgiveness*
    - *Your life is not about you – respond to the consecration within your vocation*
    - *You will experience dark nights of faith and of love, and of meaning.*
    - *You, like Christ, are a dying and rising reality*
  
  o In your relationships with others never bracket the essentials: charity, graciousness, respect.
• A more-conscious sense of the “Prodigal, Loving God we live under

  o The revelation in the Cross – of God’s unconditional love

  o The revelation in Creation and Nature – of God’s prodigal and reckless character.