Insane for the Light: Spirituality for our Wisdom Years

Outline ...

I. Situating our “Wisdom Years” – Anthropologically and Spiritually
II. Aging: The Intent of God and Nature – Wisdom by Conscription
III. Moving toward Wisdom - The Psychological and Spiritual Challenges of Late Generativity
IV. The Ultimate Task within our Wisdom Years – Blessing others
V. Giving our Deaths Away – Our Last Greatest Gift
VI. The Stages of our Lives - A Mystical view
VII. Life within the Communion of Saints – Still Connected and Still Giving

Part One - Situating our “Wisdom Years” - Anthropologically and Spiritually

Three kinds of souls, three prayers

1. I am a bow in your hands, Lord; draw me, lest I rot.
2. Do not overdraw me, Lord, I shall break,
3. Overdraw me, Lord, and who cares if I break!       (Nikos Kazantzakis)

Spirituality and the Seasons of our Lives

1. Distinguishing the seasons of life in terms of spirituality
   - Some of the important work being done today in the field of spirituality; e.g., Richard Rohr.
   - One size doesn’t fit all!
     - Jesus’ invitations in the Gospels – challenging us at different stages of our lives
     - The classical mystics – and their concept of stages of the spiritual life
   - A salient metaphor: Nikos Kazantzakis - the two great struggles in life, “wrestling with the devil and wrestling with God”
   - Negative examples: What happens when we don’t do this?
     - The ”Martha-Mary” tension

2. We can divide the spiritual journey into three distinct phases:
   i) Youth - “The struggle to get our lives together”
   ii) Generativity - “The struggle to give our lives away”
      - The Early years – “The Generativity of bringing to birth, feeding, carrying, and nurturing.”
      - The “Wisdom years” – “The Generativity of mentoring and blessing”
   iii) Late Life – “The Struggle to give our deaths away”

Youth – “Struggling to get our lives together”
• The struggles towards initial, essential discipleship - "wrestling with the devil", the powerful, chaotic energies of youth: "to leave home and find your way back come home"

  o The chaotic energies of the first-half of life: "From being driven out of home by puberty to coming home again"
    *Eros ... the sheer pulse for life
    *sexuality ... its brute force inside us
    *restlessness ... our congenital insatiability
    *loneliness ... our distance from intimacy
    *insubstantiality ... the struggle for meaning, personal identity, significance, and self-worth
    *inchoate moral desire ... the struggle for moral rectitude
    *inchoate nostalgia ... to "come home", to roots, to moral companionship, to quiet, to solitude.
    *temptations ... pleasure, comfort, affluence, power

• It usually takes 10-20 years to "come home", to achieve what John of the Cross calls "PROFICIENCY", i.e., Generativity

**Generativity ... "Struggling to Give our lives for others"**

1) The Early Years – “The Generativity of bringing to birth, feeding, carrying, and nurturing”
   - Generativity – Erik Erikson – Generativity is what spawns, nurtures, and blesses life.
     - It brings oxygen into a room as opposed to sucking oxygen out of a room
   - The Archetype = Mother/Father; wife/husband; warrior/prophet
   - Archetypal function
     - To order, feed, carry, and initially bless

   o Early "Generativity" ... its characteristics
     - an essentially transformed motivation (broken the pleasure principle)
     - an essential identity
     - an essential integrated sexuality
     - carrying life rather than being carried
     - an essentially "comfortable" and at ease (beyond the tumultuous restlessness of youth
     - a healthy "solitude"
     - Generally a time when you are busy, habitually conscripted by duty, and pretty clear on what you should be doing.

   - Struggles
     - Busyness
     - Pressure
     - Finances
     - Insecurity about your own maturity

2) Later Generativity – The Wisdom Years - “The Generativity of Mentoring and Blessing”
   - When do these years begin?
   - Archetype = Magus/Elder/Sophia/Lover
   - Archetypal function = Mentor, bless, and give and take delight
   - Psychological and Spiritual Struggles within Mid-Life
     - Psychologically - "mid-life crises"
     - Anthropologically - the puer and puella syndrome and the struggle to move beyond the “hunger” of the child to become the “blessing” elder.
     - Mystically - the struggle of proficients - the resentment of "Martha" – which is disillusionment and the potential to revert to immaturity
     - the longing for another "honeymoon"
     - boredom and resentment of duty
     - joylessness - bordering on anger
the tendency to busyness as an escape
lack of gratitude and lack of awareness of privilege

- A new “puberty” besets us in the aging process, i.e., a biological, psychological, and emotional force pushing us away from “home”, and, like puberty, accompanied by changes both in our bodily structure and in our libidinal areas. A push asking for a further initiation rite.
- An inchoate nagging beneath the surface begins to beckon us

Part Two – Aging: The Intent of God and Nature – *Wisdom by Conscription*

Outline ... Some Anthropologies of Aging

1. James Hillman – Jungian psychologist and anthropologist
2. Hindu Anthropology
3. Germaine Greer – British feminist writer
4. Alice Miller – Neo-Freudian psychologist
5. Kathleen Dowling Singh – Hospice worker

- “Let us ask why our later years take a certain form and show certain characteristics. Perhaps `usefulness’ needs to be regarded aesthetically. Must the soul be properly aged before it leaves? We can then imagine aging as a transformation in beauty as much as in biology. The old are like images on display that transpose biological life into imagination, into art. The old become strikingly memorable, ancestral representations, characters in the play of civilization, each unique, irreplaceable figure of value. Aging: an art form?” (*James Hillman, The Force of Character*)

1. The Insights of James Hillman

A. James Hillman’s basic metaphors in *The Force of Character*: The anthropological intelligence within the aging process

- So when it comes to aging, I am led to assume that there is intelligence in life that intends aging just as it intends growth in youth. We unfold ... both in youth and in aging. It is an enormous mistake to read the signs of aging as indications of dying rather than as initiations into another way of life.
- Afternoon knows what the morning never suspected. (Swedish proverb)
- The main pathology of later years is our idea of later years.
- “Wrinkles and creases are not merely signs of aging flesh and drying skin, they display the lines of character.”
- “Aging deliteralizes biology just when we are most enslaved to it.”
- We don’t let go easily, “either of throne or the drive that took us there.”
- *Earlier years must focus on getting things done, while later years consider what was done and how.*

1. The essential metaphor – “Mellowing out the soul in cracked old barrels”
- The metaphor – Aging mellows the soul
  - This happens mainly through a letting go that aids reconciliation and forgiveness
  - It reverses the law of the universe - “the survival of the gentlest!”
  - It moves us from biology to soul. It helps let in the other world

2. A second metaphor: The aged person as “a stone in the river”, giving the river its character:
- Productivity is too narrow a measure of usefulness, disability too cramping a notion of helplessness. An old woman may be helpful simply as a figure valued for her character. Like a stone at the bottom of a riverbed, she may do nothing but stay still and hold her ground, but the river has to take her into account and alter its flow because of her. An older man by sheer presence plays his part as a character in the drama of the family and neighbourhood. He has to be considered, and patterns adjusted simply because he is there. His character brings particular qualities to every scene, adds to their intricacy and
depth by representing the past and the dead. When all the elderly are removed to retirement communities, the river flows more smoothly back home. No disruptive rocks. Less character too."

3. Some examples of how aging develops character and mellow the soul:
   - Why our bodies begin sag in old age.
     i. The old should be stooped; they should carry the weight of the planet for the young! Moreover, "when the body begins to sag it is abandoning sham and hypocrisy. The body leads the way down, deepening your character. It doesn’t know how to lie. ... Aging makes metaphor out of biology. The organic changes are part of poetic speech."
   - Why we awake at night as we get older.
     ii. Nature turns us into monks! We must have our conversations with Nyx, the goddess of night and her children – and we can only have these at night because we won’t deal with the goddess of night and her children when the sun is out.
   - Why our sexual life must change...
     iii. The strength of this character lies less in controlling lustful fantasies than in understanding their transpersonal nature as a cosmic dynamic.
   - Why the senses seem to dull in later years
     iv. Sensation is just as strong, but it is now detached from the physical senses, “it is now more literary and less literal”
   - Why the propensity for “heart failure” in the older years
     v. "Could these recurrent fears of acute heart failure reflect other, more chronic failures of the heart? Could heart troubles in later years also refer to a troubled heart? ... As you lie rigid in your bed or stare out over water, the heart re-enacts how you betrayed your friend forty years ago, played the evil sister, the negligent daughter, the shirking friend. You see clearly and feel fully the injuries caused to spouses, parents, lovers, partners, dependents strewn in the wake of your self-centred demands and delusional beliefs
   - Why old people sometimes push the young away.
     vi. To do the inner work that is now required
     vii. "Pedophobia leaps up like an instinctual reaction [in the old]. It functions protectively, keeping youth away. The youth corrupts the old from our principal occupation: character and our aging fate.
     viii. A science of aging that starts in the physiology of change rather than in its significance for the individual is not speaking to the aging person. ... If that field that studies old age is influenced by the archetype of youth, will it not aim to retard or reverse aging rather than discover its significance? Our efforts must not be at stopping the aging process biologically, but at “funding what more likely nourishes older years; companionship, freedom, the arts, nature, silence, service, simplicity, safety."
   - Why the skin dries out.
     ix. Archetypally, youth is moist, old age is dry. But ... damp is heavy, it bogs down, pulls down, is messy - while dryness illuminates, burns away what’s extra, makes us light, purifies, clears away mess, and ultimately yields the dry salt of wisdom, dry wit, dry humour, dry eye, the chance for pure flame."
   - Why we become muddled in old age
     x. The muddle reflects the merging of things into a more complex and richer image. Like an ancestor you are beginning to grasp the world less personally but more in its essentials.

II. The anthropological stages within Hinduism: Stages of life
   i) Childhood
   ii) Student
   iii) Householder
   iv) Forest dweller
   v) Sannyasin - “Holy Beggar”

III. Germaine Greer - Stages in a woman’s life
   i) Infancy - childhood
   ii) Adolescent - Nubility
   iii) Wifehood
iv) Motherhood
v) Menopause - “the transition”
vi) Being the Crone, the elder - life as being valued for more than your biology

IV. Alice Miller – The Drama of the Gifted Child
b. The drama
c. The anthropological task of mid-life and beyond - grieving, reconciliation, forgiveness.

V. Kathleen Dowling Singh – Aging and Dying as “calibrated to bring us into the realm of spirit”

a. Our self-consciousness as radically limiting our awareness
b. A pre-self-conscious baby as “luminous”
c. The formation of our ego (self-consciousness) as predicated on four massive “contractions”
   1. Our separation of self from other
   2. Our separation of life from death
   3. Our separation of mind from body
   4. Our separation of our own luminosity and complexity from our conscious awareness – the formation of our shadow
d. The process of aging and death as breaking down these contractions and putting us again into the wide realm of reality.
e. Singh on Kubler-Ross and the stages of dying
   Singh accepts these – “Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Acceptance”, but says some stages lie beyond acceptance ... i.e. “despair ... surrender ... ecstasy”

Appendix ... Some questions for discussion and reflection...

1) What is my “worst-case” scenario fear about my own aging?
2) What kinds of loneliness do I now feel that I didn’t feel when I was younger? What kind of joys do I feel now that I didn’t feel when I was younger?
3) In watching loved ones age, what has bothered me and haunted me the most?
4) What kind of loneliness comes with being valued less and less for our biology?
5) What might be the real joy in being an “Elder”?
6) What things might we do to better prepare ourselves and others (family members, community members, friends) for the later stages of life?
7) What structural things do we need to do within our communities and churches to help make aging the rich anthropological process it was meant to be?
8) What elements in our culture most resist and deny the aging process?

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

B. 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”
C. Aging into Wisdom
   a.  The need to start “early”- Advice from an Elder
   b.  “We don’t become angry in our old age”
D. 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.
E. The Spiritual tasks … moving towards
   •  Fruitfulness as replacing Achievement
   •  Gratitude
      o  A counsel from Morris West
      o  The ultimate virtue underlying all love and virtue
      o  The Eucharistic words of Jesus
      o  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
Part Four - The Ultimate Task within our Wisdom Years – Blessing Others

1. What is a Blessing?
   - A story of non-blessing.
   - What is a blessing?

   **Bonhoeffer:** A blessing is visible, perceptible, effective proximity of God.

   o A ritual blessing.
   o The word: **BENE DICERE** (to speak well of somebody)
   o Biblical examples of God blessing:
     - *Genesis 1*: God blesses the earth and our lives ("It is good!")
     - *The Baptism of Jesus* - "This is my beloved child in whom I take delight!"
   o Blessing as seen by its opposite - a curse.
   o Components of a blessing:
     - Seeing and admiring a person
     - Speaking well of them - delighting in them
     - Giving your life so that they might have life ...

     **Maturity as coming at the moment when we begin to die and give our seed away - analogy of a flower.**
   - **An image - deconstricting the heart/body**

   o Its opposite - components of a curse:
     - not seeing, demanding that we be seen and admired
     - demanding that we be spoken well of
     - using other people's lives to build up our own

   o A note
     - blessing as "coming down from the top"
     - blessing as being most powerful inside the same gender

   o Examples of blessings
     - How this might work concretely
     - Giving someone a “portion of your spirit”
       - Elijah and Elisha
       - Two personal examples

2. Blessing our way out of depression and anger - to wholeness and delight
   - The answer to depression
When we act like God we get to feel like God!

3. The Ultimate Human Maturity
   - Not martyrdom
   - Blessing

4. A Poem
   "My fiftieth year and come and gone.
   I sat, a solitary man,
   In a crowded London shop,
   An open book and empty cup
   On a marble table-top.
   While on the shop and street I gazed
   My body of a sudden blazed;
   And twenty minutes more or less
   It seemed so great my happiness
   That I was blessed and could bless. (William Butler Yeats - Vacillation)

Part Five - Giving our Deaths Away – Our Last Greatest Gift

A. Review - The spiritual journey as having three distinct phases
   - Essential discipleship – “The struggle to get our lives together”
   - Generative discipleship – “The struggle to give our lives away”
     - Early Generativity
     - Mid-Life Generativity
   - Radical discipleship – “The “struggle to give our deaths away”
     - Late Life Generativity

B. The Struggle to Give Our Deaths Away
   - Nouwen: At a certain point in our lives the question is no longer: “What can I still do so that my life makes a contribution?” But: “How can I now live so that my death will be an optimal blessing to my family, the church, and the world?”
   - At some point in life we should stop working on our agenda and begin to work on our obituary.
   - An hermeneutical key: “Home is where we start from.” (T.S. Eliot)

C. Images for the struggle:
   b. Mystically - "the dark night of the spirit"
   c. Mythically - "to leave home again"
   d. Poetically - "insane for the light"
   e. Hindu Spirituality - "the Sannyasin"
   f. Richard Rohr - "the holy old fool"

D. Our movement towards death as our “passion”
   a. The concept of passion - as PASSIO
      - Nouwen’s story
      - Helen’s story
      - Mick’s story
      - Heather King story
   b. Jesus as giving "his death" for us.
   c. The final challenge of our lives.
d. “Blood and water” as pouring out after death

e. John Paul II – John Paul - the broken

f. A note on how we should not be naïve about the dying process itself and how it connects to faith:
   • Iris Murdoch – A common soldier dies without fear, Jesus died afraid.
   • Henri Nouwen – In Memoriam, the death of his mother and the lesson
   • Some people do not go through “the test” – but go through acceptance to surrender – others, including Jesus, go through acceptance, “despair”, and then surrender.
   • Michael Buckley – Jesus and Socrates.

E. The “mystery” of leaving “spirit” behind
   • The dynamic between what we give in our presence and in our absence
   • Jesus – “If I don’t go, you cannot receive my spirit.”
   • A common experience of this: a child leaving home to make his or her own place in the adult world.
   • The “spirit” we leave behind when we die

F. An imaginative construct of the “dark night of the spirit”:
   • Getting on the "plane to Pakistan"
   • The “radical character” of this
   • The correct moment for this
   • The underlying dynamic – a mimicking of one’s own death
   • The “spirit” that is left behind
   • The challenge today to find out what “getting on a plane to Pakistan” might mean for us.

G. Aging and dying as mellowing the soul, and putting us into “purgatory”

H. Dying a “happy death” – Ruth Burrows on a happy death.

F. A Poem by Mary Oliver

Death Comes

When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse …

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness? …

When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world. (New and Selected Poems, Vol.1)

G. A Journey Down the Birth Canal – A Parable
Once upon a time, twin children were conceived. For a time, they had no consciousness. They grew silently, though steadily. After a time, their bodies had formed fully and, with that, slowly they began to have feelings and thoughts.

Slowly too they began to perceive each other. With all that – feelings, thoughts, company with each other – they began to blossom and they sensed that life was good. They played a lot, laughed a lot and felt themselves full of life.

One day, feeling all this goodness, one said to the other: “How lucky we are to have been conceived and to have this world.” The other replied: “Yes, and how good it is to have a mother who gives us life.” And that very thought made them even happier and they began to stretch and to explore their world with renewed interest and vigor.

As they explored the womb, they found the life-cord which gave them blood from the mother. Sensing how precious was that cord they would often clutch it and murmur phrases or make up songs that said things like: “How great is the love of our mother that she has given us life and shares her blood with us!”

And they lived happily in their mother’s womb.

Months passed and their feelings began to change. Sometimes the womb seemed smaller and threatened to contract and expel them. “What does this mean? Why do things seem to be closing in on us?” said one twin to the other. “It means that we are soon going to be born, the other replied.

Both grew silent and deeply afraid for both knew that birth was near and that it would mean leaving the womb and the warmth and security of the mother. So one said to the other: “If I had my choice, I would never be born. I would stay here forever.”

“But we must be born,” stated the other stoically, “everyone has to be born.” For in their explorations they had discovered evidence that others had been there before them that the mother had given birth previously.

“But what if there isn’t life after birth?” protested the first. “How can there be life after birth? Aren’t we expelled from the womb and cut off from the mother? Besides have you ever talked to anyone who has been born? Has anyone ever re-entered the womb and told us about life after birth? No. And if that is the case, if there is no life after birth, then why were we conceived in the first place?”

Wallowing in despair, he clutched more tightly to the life cord that attached him to his mother and said: “Since life is so absurd, there can be no mother.” The other protested: “But there has to be a mother. How else would we have come to be? What else could be sustaining us?”

“This womb has always been here and it gives us our nourishment,” proclaimed the other. “Besides if there is a mother, where is she? Have you ever seen her? Has anyone ever seen her? Why doesn’t she ever talk to us or show herself to us?”

“No, there is no mother. We invented the idea of her so we wouldn’t have to face the hard facts of life. The idea of a mother is an opium for those who cannot face the fact that this womb is all that there is.”

Both grew silent, one becoming despondent and despairing, the other resigning herself to birth. One day they both sensed that what they most feared was imminent. They were about to be born. Powerless to stop the contractions that were expelling them from their world, they were pushed down the birth canal, one following the other.

They cried as they emerged into the light and gasped to breathe in a way that neither had done before. In all that trauma, it took them a while to realize that they were now lying on the breast of the mother, wrapped in arms which were as secure as they were loved, and gazing into a world whose immensity and beauty dwarfed anything they had yet ever imagined.

---

Some quotes on death and dying

- We have a narrative for fighting death, but we don’t have a narrative about letting go. Amanda Bennett.
- In dying we must let ourselves “sink away into the incomprehensibility of God, as Jesus did, not in bitterness, grasping, or anger, but in trust, gratitude, and forgiveness. Karl Rahner
- “The important thing is not to survive no matter what, but what meaning we can give our life.” Etty Hillesum
- Dag Hammarskjold: “Do not seek death. Death will find you. But seek the road which makes death a fulfillment.”
- “When the signs of age begin to mark my body (and still more when they touch my mind); when the illness that is to diminish me or carry me off strikes from without or is born within me; when the painful moment comes in which I suddenly awaken to the fact I am losing hold of myself and am absolutely passive within the great unknown forces that have formed me; in all those dark moments, O God, grant that I may understand that it is you (provided only my faith is strong enough) who are painfully parting the fibres of my being in order to penetrate to the very marrow of my substance and bear me away within yourself...Teach me to treat my death as an act of communion.” (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin)
Part Six - The Stages of our Lives - A Mystical view


1) Pre-conversion ... "unhealthy indifference"
   *unhealthy indifference
   *the pleasure principle as one's basic motivation
   *unhealthy complacency
2) Conversion ... "falling in love"
   *loss of indifference
   *initial transformation re the pleasure principle as the principle for motivation.
   *obsession
   *new energy fuels the personality
3) First Fervor ... "the honeymoon" - "The active night of the senses"
   *high levels of passion
   *excess
   *public display
   *endless energy
   *discursive abilities (to and about the beloved)
   *desire for heroism/uniqueness
   *loss of balance
   *sense that "this" is enough for you
   **"main-lining" of archetypal energy ... but ... a "taste" of ultimate reality
4) The Waning of First Fervor ... "death of the honeymoon" - "The passive night of the senses"
   *disillusionment
   *the waning of fervor
   *boredom
   *loss of the discursive abilities
   *the move from tasting the archetypal to seeing the real
   *growth in genuine solicitousness (healthy anxiety)
5) Proficiency ... "life and love as adult decision"
   - love is a decision
     i) First stage - dryness
     ii) Second stage - ease
       -maturity
       -sense of being "at home"
       -a different kind of "gnawing" begins underneath
6) The Night of the Spirit ... "purgatory on earth"
   i) First stage - sufficient fidelity and maturity
      -fidelity builds strength for a more radical setting out
      -desire for deeper union
   ii) Second stage - radical gospel decision
      -radical decision, against common sense, on basis of the gospel
   iii) Third stage - radical "dryness"
      -terrible pain and doubt even within a dark security
   iv) Fourth stage - "the living flame" - ecstasy
      -God breaks through
      -occasional bursts of ecstasy
      -longing for death and full consummation
Part Seven - Life within the Communion of Saints – Still Connected and Still Giving

A. Our belief in the “Communion of Saints”
B. Connecting to each other within the Communion of Saints – Finding each other in “Galilee”
C. Leaving our spirits behind – our fruitfulness survives our time on earth
D. Special Questions
   a. Literature on “after death” experiences
   b. Does everyone go to heaven?
   c. Heaven, hell, and purgatory
   d. Our fear of death – Some perspectives and some literature
      † Kathleen Dowling Singh – We create our own fear of death
      † Lessons from some beautiful Stoics
         o Nikos Kazantzakis – Report to Greco
         o Annie Riggs – The Bright Hour
         o Paul Kalanithi – When Breath Becomes Air
         o John Michael Gallagher – Into Extra Time
         o Kathie Roiphe – The Violet Hour: Great Writers at the End
   e. The question of a “happy death”
   f. Suicide
   g. Other