10/25/09-7/18/85

"AS I GROW OLD"

This phrase "As I Grow Old" applies to all of us, whether we are age 10 - 15 - 20 - 40 - 60 - 70 - 80. It is a statement that applies to every human being that was ever born.

Does it ever occur to us how our thoughts, feelings, philosophies, reactions to other human beings, reactions to our environment around us changes "as we grow old". Our thought processes are in a constant state of turmoil, changes that manifestly alter our view of life. Our reactions to a situation that occurred 30 years ago is dramatically altered 30 years later. Your feelings and opinions about many things have undergone a complete reversal.

Now in view of the foregoing realities of life, in what direction are we going? Are these changes that occur, good or bad.? What is happening to us as we grow older? What feelings or thoughts do we find that begin to preoccupy our mind.?

Let us examine our consciences and see what are the changes that have occurred in me as the years moved on.

One of the first things that we observe is the obvious diminishing of our ego. In the early years, our thoughts are very much self-centered on ourselves, but now we begin to observe the existence of other humans, and now begin to feel some concern about them. Who are they? What do they feel? What do they think? You begin to realize that they are very much like you. They are also subject to anxieties, depressed moods, emotional ups and downs. As your ego diminishes, more of your concern becomes directed toward others. You begin to observe a common bond.

Now low and behold, another observation comes to the fore. The world around you, your physical environment, look at that sky! what beauty, what clouds and formations, what colors! That sunrise and sunset! How come I never noticed before. Out of that same sky comes peals of thunder and bolts of lightning with torrents of rain that men have no control over. Earthquakes, tornadoes that destroy and shatter homes, towns, villages, kills thousands and thousands of people.

In my early years, my reactions to such matters were merely an inconvenience to my plans, and annoying situation that forced me to alter and postpone plans I had made. But now, in my mature years, this vast unleashing of such power and destructive forces of nature begin to frighten me.

I begin to ask, where does this power come from. Does it all happen haphazardly or by accident? Could there be someone who directs this? Now I turn my attention to trees, lakes, rivers, oceans, animals, bird, study the patterns of animal behavior, the process of reproduction of the species and marvel at the perfection of nature. And now I would ask myself, does all this

come about by accident or does someone direct it all.

I always took our four seasons for granted, spring, summer, fall and winter. All I did was alter my clothing, my change of activities and let it go at that, merely adjusted to the changes. And now I wonder what power caused the change of the contours of the earth. The changes in cold, heat, the heavy snows that make the earth look so bleak and desolate.

And then to notice the heavy rains in spring, that soften the earth for the blooming of beautiful flowers and to observe trees that shed their frost and come to life. The warmth of the air announcing the advent of summer. This is truly a resurrection of the earth. All this must certainly, is not a coincidence. There must be a Deity who created it all, and with such perfection. All that man can do is look at it in amazement and wonderment and say to himself, am I part of this great plan. All seeds that are planted in the earth must first die before the flowering of a fruit, a vegetable or flower coming to begin. Does this plan incorporate my being also?

When my body ceases to exist, die, decay and turn to dust, it is like the seed in the ground that becomes resurrected. I now come to a positive conclusion of the existence of God who created it all and directs it and furthermore I am convinced of a Resurrection and that God gave us his son, Jesus Christ, who is the light and the resurrection, and that all men since the time of Adam have been asking, who am I? where did I come from and where am I going?

Now that I am convinced that there exists a God with a great love for the people and the world he created with great powers far beyond the human comprehension of any mortal being.

Now I speculate further and say to myself, if He is an all loving God and loves his created beings, why does he permit and allow such great suffering among the millions of human beings on this earth. With His great power why does he allow pain, starvation, disease, death, tortures, wars, miseries, robberies, etc?

Why does he allow the creatures he created to lie, cheat, deceive each other, permit them to plan murders, adulteries, rapes and all manner of evil things?

Now in my younger years I'm sure that these things existed but I was only vaguely aware of them. I was too involved in my own ego and my own plans and how to make myself a huge success, plan my own destiny. I planned to make lots of money, acquire much wealth and possessions. My aim was to become the envy of my fellow beings. It never occurred to me that disease, accident, poor health, misfortune could devastate my life. These things might happen to others, not me.

Now back to my previous question, why does God permit these horrors?

In searching for the answers to this question, my mind begins to formulate a thought which seems to possess a cloud of enlightenment. Now here is my thought. Among the many

men and women I have ever known in my lifetime, our observations come to the fore. They all seem to possess a free will. The will to do good or evil exists in all of us. God left it to mankind to exercise his free will. The good and the bad become obvious in the pattern of human behavior. There are those who are solely motivated by greed, malice, cheating, lying, insolent, fraud, boastful, immoral, show no kindness or pity toward others. They harbor lustful and shameful passions, pervasiveness of sexual acts, rampant immortality.

Conversely, there are those who are honest, considerate, have compassion for those less fortunate, truthful, generous in sharing with others, willing to assist, help the weak, the aged, the sick, the infirm and the dying.

A common misconception I observe is that many of us have the conviction the poor are good and rich are wicked and evil. Not so, I find many good and charitable persons among the rich who possess traits of kindness and honesty and decency and by the same token, among them the wicked, evil, corruptible also exists among the rich. Now as to the poor, the same traits of evil and good exist among the poor. So therefore, I conclude that men and women possess a free will, that is God given, have the option to choose the good or the bad in exercising their free will.

As I grow old and looking back at the years, it was my choice to be a prudent man. Having enjoyed a moderate amount of success and the acquisition of material things. My financial comfort kept me from knowing famine and want. The good Lord conferred many blessings upon me among them the love and affection and a wonderful wife and children and the further blessing of grandchildren.

What more can I ask for as I grow old? I come to the realization that my years on the earth are fast coming to a close. The beautiful surroundings and loved ones must be left behind. My loved ones, I conclude, cannot be brought into my thoughts on the finality of life beyond this earth. I must acknowledge to myself that I am very much alone and that this whole world only exists because the center of my being is my mind, my soul, if you will, or a spirituality that exists in me and relates to God. Now, this soul or mind or spirit that exists in me is not tangible. It is not a material thing such as my body that one day will deteriorate, decay and turn to dust. It would seem to me that this spirituality, mind or soul cannot die. Where does it go? When the material body ceases to exist? It is quite natural to conclude that all human beings must experience the same phenomenon.

It also occurs to me that I have been talking to this mind of mine, or the soul, spirit conscience, if you will since my infancy or the age of reason.

We can count and tally the words we utter, but our mental conversations are limitless and the speed in which our thoughts occur within lightening tempo is awesome.

I look at my friends and say, you look well today. But in a flash, instantly my eyes and mind observe an ugly array of blemishes on his forehead and my mind flashes back "how ugly". Glad I don't look that way.

Now these constant and perpetual thoughts or mental conversations with myself will continue throughout my life's existence. When our body ceases to function, what will happen to the spiritual voice. Is it still forever? How could it be when it was never a voice or even a sound to begin with, merely thoughts. I conclude that this must be my soul or spirit which must return to God from whence it came. Now I say with true conviction that God is in me and is in every mortal man and woman. However, those who deny His existence are exercising their free will of choice which was given to them by God who is the essence of all that it, was and will be forever.

All during my life, I was always aware of the existence of a bible but who had the time to read and furthermore, I judged it to be the dullest book on earth. Sexy novels were a lot more exciting. But again, as I grow older I say to myself, why not take a look, maybe it has something to say. And it sure had something to say what revelations from the dawn of civilization and all mankind. The many questions that have perplexed me all my life are all in there, answered with such undeniable wisdom. Through the ages of mankind are absolutely irrefutable. The Old Testament depicting the plight of the Jews as slaves of the Egyptians, the coming of Abraham, Moses, the Ten Commandments, the advent of Jesus Christ, His message to mankind, the many parables, the sermon on the mount, the many miracles He performed, His death and crucifiction and all of the gospels, the resurrection and the promise of eternity by Him.

As I ponder the works of the Lord who says I am the resurrection, I am the light and the way whoever shall live in me shall live forever, it is not inconceivable that my spirit or soul shall live for all eternity. A soul can only attain eternal peace when it leaves a mortal body that encases it and returns to God from which it came.

As my twilight years come to a close and my inner being become more and more permeated with the love of God our father and his son, Jesus Christ, my fear of death transcends itself into a death of fear and the joy of immortality.

J.J.M.

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Note: Written by Joseph J. Montalto
Deceased July 18, 1985