



Retreat: *Affirming my Life, Loves and Death*

Article 9, December 2021 – Final of Series of 2021

“We never know if we’re going to afternoon tea or eternal life.”

(Anonymous from Noel Davis’)

Whether 90 years of age or any number above or below, these words have been

forever true. We each have our stories.

“Tis a fearful thing,” says Yehuda HaLevi (11th century), “to love/what death can touch.” Even so, we do it again and again - embracing the fullness of our humanity; coming to know the truth of our vulnerability; and finally, ‘getting’ the reality of our enduring incompleteness.

Life. Death. Loves. Unflinching acceptance and affirmation of each, makes possible radical gratitude for the whole of it. We can marvel at their beauty, despite our less than perfect participation in Jesus’ mission of healing and wholemaking in humanity and the cosmos.

We’ve reached the end of our series for this year, it too incomplete. In solitude or together we have looked back, looked forward and rested awhile in the present moment. All of it – the realities, the reflections and the sharing – have raised our consciousness, at least a little, of the sacred journey we have called **eldering**. In our first article, we quoted Richard Rohr who speaks of this journey of becoming as our ultimate journey of meaning – God’s image within us trying to fulfil itself in us.

Exercise in Consciousness

‘Tis a fearful thing
to love what death can touch.
A fearful thing
to love, to hope, to dream, to be –
to be,
And oh, to lose.
A thing for fools, this,
And a holy thing,
a holy thing
to love.

For your life has lived in me,
your laugh once lifted me,
your word was gift to me.
To remember this brings painful joy.
‘Tis a human thing, love,
a holy thing, to love
what death has touched.

Reflect on Yehuda HaLevi’s poem. Write your own poem or prayer of affirmation and radical gratitude for your life, loves and deaths. Celebrate your soul work. Mary Oliver might say:

“Pay attention
Be astonished
Tell about it.”

Catherine Shelton rsj

For the Josephite Eldering Team - Clare Conaglen (CLT), Maryellen Thomas, Colleen Woodcock, Annette Coulthart, Jane Kowalczyk, Kathleen Cramer & Michele Shipperley (Chair).

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