

July 19, 2020

Recently, our **SSCM Consecrated Laity Director** shared with us this message from **Pope Francis** urging everyone to be aware of the **elder men and women** in our midst who are in need of our **attention** and our **prayer**. She also included a reflection. I asked permission from her to use her letter for my weekly letter because I found it so meaningful.

“**Illness** weighs on the **elderly** in a new and different way compared to when one is young or an adult. It is like a hard blow that falls in an already difficult time. In the elderly, illness seems to hasten death and, in any case, diminish that time we have to live, which we already consider short. The doubt lurks that we will not recover, that “this time it will be the last time I get sick...”, and so on: these ideas come. One cannot dream of hope in a future that now appears non-existent. A renowned Italian writer, Italo Calvino, noted the bitterness of the old who suffer the loss of the things of the past, more than they enjoy the coming of the new... The Christian community must **take care** of the elderly: relatives and friends. Visiting the elderly must be done by many, together and often. We must feel a responsibility to visit the elderly who are often alone and present them to the Lord with our prayers. Jesus himself will teach us how to love them.” (Pope Francis, June 15, 2022)



Why not make the month of **July** a special time when we all **remember** the **elderly** and those who are **shut in**, even if they are not elderly. We can make use of **phone calls, time spent together, cards or letters in the mail and prayer**.

There certainly is truth in this **quote** from an Italian author, “...note the **bitterness** of the old who **suffer** the loss of the things of the past, **more** than they **enjoy** the coming of the new...” in that there is a temptation to allow the “loss of the things of the past” to affect our minds and hearts.

But it can also be true that this is also a **wonderful opportunity** to learn to grow in holiness and grow even closer to God. We can take into our **imagination** our ability of **previous years to walk and run with ease**. We can **give God praise and thanksgiving** for this wonderful gift that we’ve enjoyed for so long. And we can also give God praise and thanksgiving for the **opportunity** to learn to live with a **new gift**. We can learn to live with the gift of **Contemplation**, the gift of a slower moving world, the gift of being able to live more easily in the present moment. We can continue to list these new gifts because we have a new and wonderful gift of time and quiet to contemplate them and remember them and be aware of them. We can take into our imagination any of the losses we might experience in the process of growing older. We can look at whatever comes to our imagination and give thanks for that gift and learn to see the Grace in living without it. The time of **growing older** can be a time of **great Grace** and growth in our relationship with **ourselves**, with **others** and with **God**. We can grieve our losses and find our new opportunities for joy and giftedness of life.