

HOMILY

Senior Appreciation Mass and Celebration
September 26, 2006

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St. John the Evangelist Parish
Davison, Michigan

One of the facts of life is that we are all aging. But no matter what, we recall that saying that's older than all of us put together—*You're only as old as you feel.*

You know you're getting old when people used to say, "You're good looking," but now they say, "You're looking good."

One 81-year-old woman is proud of the fact that she doesn't look her age. One day this summer, she went into a drugstore and, talking about the heat index, said to the clerk, "Going to be ninety-seven today." The man reached across the counter, shook her hand and said, "Happy Birthday. She went home and didn't answer her phone for a week.

Another woman shared with me that her cousin's four-year-old son overheard his mother talking to his grandmother. "Don't worry Mom," she said, "you're not old; you're only seventy." "Goodness, Grandma," the child piped up, "you've reached the speed limit!"

My favorite is about a 96-year-old man who, upon admission to the nursing home, was interviewed by a social worker. The alert, twinkling-eyed, 96-year-old man was asked, "Did you have a happy childhood?" He replied, "So far, so good!"

Paul Harvey told about a lady, sometime back, who was 103. Her name was Eva Reitzel. When asked her formula for living to be a healthy, active 103, she responded in only nine words: "Stay away from doctors and stay away from men." Good advice.

I don't want to paint a picture that is too rosy. There are challenges that go with aging. Former President Ronald Regan's announcement that he had Alzheimer's brought home the tragedy of that still-to-be-solved disease. The physical

challenges of a lifetime of wear and tear on the body are very much part of aging. As someone has said, aging isn't for sissies. And who knows that better than you? We also know that every day is a gift. That's why today is called "the present."

A well-known poem, Salutation of the Dawn, says it so well.

Yesterday is but a dream.
Tomorrow is only a vision.
Live this day!

The *dream* is important, for the past is inescapably part and parcel of our lives. The *vision* is, fortunately, our hope for the future. ***But today is the only day any of us can actually live. Only today, only at this moment, are we living.***

I recall a plaque that was standard in many of the sacristies where priests vested to offer Mass:

Priest of God, celebrate this Mass as if it is your first Mass,
Your only Mass,
Your last Mass.
People of God,
Live this day as if it is your very first day,
Your only day,
Your last day.

Today, Mitch Albom has another book that is going on sale. He's the author of Tuesdays With Morrie and Five People You Meet in Heaven. His new book is entitled, For One More Day. If you had one day to spend with someone who's gone, who would it be? What would you do?

We often fantasize about a perfect day—something exotic and far away. But when it comes to those we miss, we desperately want one more familiar meal, one more conversation, even one more argument. What does that teach us? That the ordinary is precious...that the normal day is a treasure. And so, here God is blessing us with a brand new day. Is there anything we should say today before the day is over? Is there something that we need to take care of that we have been

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putting off? Is there someone that I need to speak to? Is there something that I need to make happen before this day is done?