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A view from the Commonwealth: www.seniors.gov.au

On average, people are spending around 20 years at school, technical colleges or other education institutions; 35 years working; and 20 years in retirement. There is a real need to plan for your years in retirement, so you can make the most of this time....

Evidence shows that if you come into retirement as healthy as possible, you are more likely to stay that way. Evidence also shows that if you plan for major events, such as retiring, they are more likely to happen and work out well. You should start to plan for retirement at around 35 years, if not earlier. But if this is not quite your age, it really is never too late to start.

In putting your plan together you first need to think about the bigger picture on retirement. ... Be aware that you should think of planning for retirement as being more than money and superannuation. Though these do help there are other things that make life satisfying.

- What do you want from your retirement?
- What have you done already to help make these things happen?
- Who will replace your work-mates when you want someone to share your joys and frustrations with?
- What do you think you need to do, to achieve this in your retirement?

Does your retirement plan include:

- Stopping smoking – this is a main preventable cause of ill health.
- Finding more ways to be active physically - this is the second most preventable cause of ill health.
- Continuing work - go part time or be a volunteer. Evidence shows work is good for your health.
- Enjoying healthy foods.
- Having a healthy weight.
- A yearly health check

Your future is not about what you are retiring from, but what you are retiring to. © www.seniors.gov.au

A CARE-FILLED EXIT FROM A PARISH

"Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending,"
– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

One common failure of spiritual leaders is not recognizing when to quit. It is better to leave them longing than to leave them loathing. It is better to go out in a parade than on a rail. ... Some pastors try to set up situations to extend their stay, while others meddle after they leave. Both are symptoms of the inability to let go.

It takes leaders with great integrity and spiritual insight to recognize when they have made their most worthwhile contribution and to graciously turn over the reins to another. Sometimes the energy coming from the parish sends a clear message. The facts speak for themselves. It is pathetic to watch priests who did great jobs years ago stubbornly refuse to let go long after they quit being effective, and who end up undoing much of their own work. There is a spiritual art in knowing when one's time is up.

Another common failure of spiritual leaders is that they spend little time or effort preparing their congregations for their departure. People do not fear change – they fear loss. Nothing can be as upsetting to priests and parishioners alike as an unexpected change in pastoral leadership. Resistance to change comes from a fear of the unknown or an expectation of loss. Not enough attention can be paid to those fearful feelings of life, especially in Catholic congregations who have so little say about who comes, who goes or how long they stay....

Managing change inevitably means managing fear. This is an important last ministry that priests can perform for their people. A priest who is "good at pastoring" addresses the fear and the resistance of his congregation. With care and faith, he can "talk them through it."

-- Rev Ronald Knott, *"The Spiritual Leadership of a Parish Priest: On Being Good and Being Good at It."* (Knott is writing here about term appointments, but the same spirit applies).□

Dear Brothers in Ministry

I understand that when US actor George Burns was in his 90s he was asked about his plans for retirement. He replied: "retiring at sixty-five is ridiculous. When I was sixty-five I still had pimples!"

Contrary to popular hopes and dreams, *preparing for retirement* can be detailed work! It just doesn't happen! American evangelist Dwight Moody once remarked that "preparation for [retirement] should begin not later than one's teens. A life which is empty of purpose until 65 will not suddenly become filled on retirement."

It is clear that priests' lives are not empty of purpose, and yet our interests can be narrow, task centred, and focused solely on 'the job', with no hobbies or outside interests. If that be so, imagine waking up one morning and not a soul wants to engage you; there's no job to go to, no phone calls to answer, no demanding schedules, and no people to be with! I imagine some priests may say, bring it on! But everyday experience is different: it's more a case of 'what on earth will I do next?'

While priests often *retire from responsibility* rather than from work, preparation is still very necessary. The Australian Government's Seniors' website suggests that preparation should begin at about age 35. And given that retirement is for *healthy* people, how well do we shape up? This *Information Bulletin* looks at a different ideas in the hope that, assisted by our dioceses, we may prepare well for happy days ahead. Otherwise the 'response to the psalm' may well be what it is for many unprepared single men: "Lord, free me from depression, alcohol abuse, and sleeplessness!"

With personal best wishes,

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Office for Clergy Life & Ministry

Thoughts on Retirement or *'Retirement'* or Post-75 living

WHAT'S IN A WORD:

Do you plan to retire OR *'retire'*?

The word *retirement* sits uncomfortably with some. Since they are simply moving away from the leadership of a parish and its administrative responsibility rather than from work, they are merely *'retiring'* – that is, the Clayton's version of retirement since they will continue to work and help out in parishes etc.

And yet others, for a range of reasons, including ill health, will in fact simply **retire ... full-stop**: some at the canonical age of 75, others perhaps sooner due to a variety of circumstances.

In addition, while the canonical age is 75, many priests continue to lead their parishes as PPs. Two dioceses (at least), however, require their priests to step down from the leadership of a parish at a particular age: in one case it's at 75; the other, it's 80.

Because of the present-day shortage, there may be some reluctance by dioceses to prepare men for their post-75 years. For some there is a sense of moral pressure not to retire, which may be self-imposed – out of loyalty to their parishioners, to fellow priests, or in response to bishops' wishes.

Nonetheless, in order to prevent personal, serious problems into the future (depression, alcohol abuse, sleeplessness etc), some dioceses very wisely bring together those in their 60s to discuss their future and help them plan prudently for the years ahead.

The Commonwealth Government offers this mindset as a starter for all: **"Your future is not about what you are retiring from but what you are retiring to!"** . . . In the last analysis, sensible planning is critical *both* for those retiring and those *not* planning to. As one TV advertisement says somewhat succinctly: "You have to *plan* to become, what you plan *to become!*" – and that applies to all facets of life.



FIVE PRIESTS' VIEWS ON RETIREMENT

1. Anxiety about the day

"No one in the world wants old people anymore; I wake up at four in the morning anxious about how I am going to fill in the day!"

2. Living without a community

"I had planned to retire, but now that I have reached retirement age, I am not going to ... I just can't live without my community and its support."

3. Wrong advice; Wrong medication

I did in fact retire due to serious blood pressure problems. But in recent times I have received more accurate medical advice and am now on the right medication, so I have returned to run a parish, albeit a smaller one."

4. Being in the *'right'* parish

"I spent the first 30 years of priesthood in awkward parishes and spent all those years planning where I would retire, but I have been appointed to a wonderful parish in my final years, and I'm happier than I have ever been; frankly, I will stay here till I'm carried out in a box!"

5. Don't die with the music in you

"As one priest friend has said to me, if you want to get anything done it is best to get it done before you are eighty. So I had better get busy!"

SOME HELPFUL ADVICE

- Retirement is not for idle hands
- Retirement is for healthy people
- Make sure you are not your job
- Make sure you create a routine
- Be positive and hope-filled about tomorrow



Retirement is not for idle hands. Some people can't wait to retire so that they can sit around doing nothing. But after six months, they experience 'retirement let-down'. Some in fact will suffer depression because they no longer experience the meaning, challenges, and fulfillment of their former role. It's fine to retire from your job, but don't retire from life. We all need to have clear reasons for getting out of bed every morning.

Retirement is for healthy people. Retirement is often looked on as 'decline' - physically and otherwise, involving illness and disability. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is more evidence than enough of the dignity and productiveness of one's senior years. So, be more active socially, physically, mentally; enjoy healthy foods and retain a healthy weight. Be sure to have an annual medical check-up.

Make sure you are not your job. Retired Archbishop of Los Angeles, Cardinal Roger Mahoney, once wittily remarked: "If what you *do* is what *you are*, then when you *don't*, *you're not!*" So why is it that when someone asks us what we are and what we do that we answer with our job title and description? It doesn't occur to us to say, 'I'm a human being and I enjoy life'. Men, it is said, often identify with their jobs. The more they do so, the more they experience a loss of identity at retirement. Priests are more than what they do.

Make sure you create a routine. For 40 or 50 years, priests have been accustomed to responding routinely to daily demands. The sudden ceasing of routine may well mean 'dropping out' and 'merely existing'. It is critical that from *day one* those retired create a meaningful schedule, filling it with a list of the many enjoyable things you have always wanted to do.

Be positive and hope-filled about tomorrow. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks advises: "Hope ... is what empowers us to take risks, to offer commitment, to give love, to bring new life into the world, to comfort the afflicted, to lift the fallen, to being great undertakings, to live by our ideals." Let's be positive, grateful, and hope-filled.

