

## Becoming ourselves . . .

My 5-year old grandson Josh is very fond of his Aunt Megan who lives out of town and he really looks forward to her yearly visits to Cincinnati. When she wasn't able to come this year he was sad. "She knew me when I was a baby and one and two and three, but not when I was four," he said. Even at that young age he seems to understand that he's older now and she missed a whole year of who he was at that time. It's true for all of us—we're not the way we were yesterday or how we will be tomorrow.

Becoming and growth are so much more than getting taller and older. They're about discovering and living out of the image and likeness of God within us from which we have been created. If you're anything like me you generally don't progress on the journey without some wrong turns, small and larger deaths, and bumps and bruises along the way.

Fall with its dazzling display of multi-colored leaves followed by the stark barrenness of naked trees reminds us of that life is ever-changing and much of growth happens slowly and often unseen. We can choose to say "Yes" to that growth or we can plant our feet firmly and try to stay in place. It works for a while, but often we find ourselves with an empty gnawing that's hard to ignore and we reluctantly begin that journey, often kicking and screaming and wanting keep things as they are—in our control.

If anyone would have told me as a cocky young journalist covering Vatican II, the civil rights movement, and the Vietnam War in the 1960's that I would choose to leave that exciting world to do something as ordinary as to stay home with my babies when they were young, I would have told them they were crazy. After all, I had my own weekly column at that time, was invited to make speeches in the community, and hobnobbed with movers and shakers. I even had visions of making such a difference in a major third world country that there would be my statue in the town square, and a festival in my honor. When I look back at this, I'm embarrassed by my arrogance. As Josh would say, that's who I was at 25. It was a step on the journey, recognizing and using my gifts, but, as I discovered, there was so much more—most of it

like the trees in fall and winter--dying, unseen and unknown.

Anyone who knows me will tell you I tend to be bull-headed and like to be in control. My babies taught me something I could only have learned from that experience of staying at home--how to be actively present to them and to begin to savor the small moments and experiences of daily life. Yet I still felt the hunger for the prestige and visible success I had previously experienced. I talked about this with my friend, Gloria, who once was on staff at

St. Leo's, and mentored me as a busy young mom. "What you really need is the Lord," she'd gently remind me. I responded with all the reasons why I didn't have time. But she persisted. Mostly to get her off my back I agreed to devote the first 10 minutes of the day to consciously being with God. And that tiny step has changed my life and continues to do so. It put me in touch with an empty space where God and I connect and I miss it if I go a day without it.

It was that daily conscious contact that carried me through divorce and annulment, single parenting, times of more "month at the end of the money," remarriage, accompanying my husband as he journeyed toward death, and letting go of my plans for a long marriage and lasting deepening relationship. An unexpected gift of those short years together was the prayer we shared together twice a day and the depth of intimacy that it created—not just with each other but also with God. It was something I suggested to couples I worked with as a counselor and was blessed to see how that simple act often brought healing and growth to their relationships. I've learned that gifts received often become gifts to share.

I realize that there are fewer years ahead than behind for me, but I am convinced that there is still more growth ahead. New leaves are growing unseen on aging branches and there is new fruit still to blossom and mature. I have no idea of the journey will lead but I know who goes with me. God continues to tilt the mirror of my spirit to see God's reflection in me—and both of us smile.

—Angela Anno

### ☆ Deuteronomy 31:8

The LORD himself is who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you. Don't be afraid. Don't be discouraged."

