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About Vintage Voice

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VINTAGE VOICE



Retirement: Rediscovering What It Means To Be an Introvert

By the Rev. Paul D. Rietmann

I greatly enjoyed reading Donald Fishburne's article entitled, "*What's Retiring Like?*" in a recent issue of *Vintage Voice*. Being recently retired myself, I related to his experience of feeling "lighthearted" as he enters into this new phase of life. His article has encouraged me to go deeper in my reflections about my own first year of retirement.

I retired on All Saints' Sunday in November 2014, just over a year ago. It has been a wonderful, exciting year of change and transition. Similar to Father Fishburne's experience, I feel lighter, more relaxed, and much more energetic than I have in decades. I have discovered a new joy in everyday life that feels like a precious gift from God.

Looking deeper into my soul, I have rediscovered something important about myself: I am predominantly an introvert. I am one of the many clergy in the Church who are introverts by nature but push themselves to be more extroverted in order to perform their ministries. I have become aware of just how much energy it took for me to minister in the parish day after day, week after week, year after year. Don't get me wrong: I loved being a parish priest. However, there is big part of me that would have liked to have been a contemplative monk in a monastery for part of my career.

Since retiring, I have been relishing my time in solitude out of the public eye. It feels like I can breathe freely again, or breathe more deeply. I like to spend my mornings reading, praying, and going for long walks. I look forward to playing fast rounds of golf alone early in the morning, watching the sun come up. I enjoy having coffee with a few close friends. I cherish spending my days with my wife, Judie, cooking, traveling, and working on our home.

In a mysterious way it feels like I am rediscovering an important part of my personality that I have neglected all of these years. And do you know what? I am enjoying myself as an introvert, and I am working on not feeling guilty about it. This new awareness rings true within the deepest parts of my soul. I sense a new-found inner freedom that I haven't felt for a long, long time.

Carl Jung, the twentieth-century Swiss psychologist, wrote that mid-life can be an opportunity to round out our personalities by rediscovering parts of our souls that we have neglected or forgotten during our adult years. I think that the same can be said about retirement. During this phase of life we can give ourselves a gift — the gift of discovering parts of our lives and our souls that perhaps have gone dormant. We can come alive in new ways or rediscover our old ways of being. For me, that involves embracing the introverted side of my personality. It is an exciting, mysterious, and creative process. What gift might retirement bring to *your* spiritual journey?



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