

Message from the Rector

Dear People of God,

Summer is moving much too quickly! It certainly does not have the summer “feel” because of COVID-19. We remain cautious praying a vaccine may be found bringing an end to the coronavirus. Unfortunately, we remain gripped with social distancing and masks as “new norms” and latest summer apparel.

I was blessed with Msgr. Leo Mahon as my pastor from 1992-1996 at St. Mary of the Woods while I served as the Associate Pastor. I became pastor at SMOW after Msgr. Mahon’s retirement on December 31, 1996. Msgr. Mahon was a superb homilist and gifted writer. He wrote weekly columns in the church bulletin while he served as pastor.

I saved Msgr. Mahon’s weekly bulletin article from October 31, 1993 and wanted to share it with you today. This article touched my heart. Seasons change and the seasons of our lives also change Enjoy and pass it on

Yesterday, Sunday, October 24 was one of the finest days I’ve seen in many years. The sun was warm and bright; the air was clear and dry; the breeze was blowing gently from the south; the leaves both on the trees and on the ground were a patchwork of brilliant colors: gold, yellow, russet and purple. I celebrated two Masses in the morning, another in the afternoon and had a pre-marital appointment in the evening so I wasn’t able to get out and walk much. Still I enjoyed the day very, very much. People often say that Autumn is the loveliest time of the year in Chicago. Yesterday and today are vivid proof of that statement.

All during the day, the notes of the concerto “Four Seasons” sounded in my ears. It’s one of my favorite pieces. It’s not only gorgeous music but it was written by a priest, Fr. Antonio Vivaldi. Once you know a composer, you can recognize his musical style even when you don’t know the name of the work. It’s the same with Mozart, Vivaldi, Beethoven and many more.

Above all, it’s true of God, the master builder, the consummate composer. There is a certain similarity between God’s masterworks. Take for example, the four

seasons of the year and the growth process of a human being. Spring is often erratic and exasperating but shows great promise of the beauty and fertility to come. Summer is strong and hot, full of passion, nature at its zenith. Autumn is a time of maturity and brilliant color – Nature slowing down and reflecting rather proudly on its work. Winter is a time of stillness and dying – Nature surrendering to the approach of death. It's a time of remembering but also one of looking to the future with hope. Winter, however, has its own beauty: naked trees and dead grass mercifully covered with a thick carpet of dazzlingly white snow.

I think of myself in terms of the four seasons. If my life-span is some eighty years (I fervently wish such will be the case) then my life can be divided into four segments of twenty years apiece.

The first twenty years were my Summer. I was ordained a priest at the start of that season. And I went out bursting with life. I was passionate about my vocation. I worked hard. Those were the most productive and creative years of my life. My name happens to appear in many books, particularly about Latin America. Those passages relate the exploits of my Summertime. I was brave and aggressive and daring but I was also foodhardy at times, and arrogant. Despite the warts and the mistakes, I was a human being at the height of the powers God had given me.

Then came the third segment of my life, from 41 to 60, Autumn. I found my energy level decreasing. I began to see that I was not going to conquer the world nor was I going to reform the Church according to my dreams and desires. The heat of passion and hard work were giving way to wisdom. I discovered that I was becoming wise and tolerant and far more gentle. Those were my best years. I had come to know myself – my limits as well as my talents. I was happy with myself, able to see the good in others and encourage them, capable of seeing the truth in muted tones and not always in black and white.

And now I am well into the last time-segment of my life, my Winter. Physically, the signs are there. I used to love to walk while playing golf, even 36 holes on a hot day. Now I love riding in an electric cart which is really the golfer's wheelchair. When I hit a ball on to the green, I can't see it unless I'm very close. Cataract surgery is coming up soon. I used to be able to genuflect easily, now it takes an extraordinary effort to get my knee all the way to the floor. Mentally I'm

beginning to forget a little. I can still recall names well enough, but I have to concentrate much harder.

Spiritually I am at peace. As Winter has its great moments such as Christmastime, so I have great friends to surround me, young people to fascinate me and mature couples whose struggles remind me of my own. I look back at my first three seasons with fond memories and few regrets. I still look forward to the passing of Winter and the coming of Spring. But now I am beginning to wonder what the eternal Springtime, after my last dying, will be like.

I hope you will not think I'm being morbid or morose. I'm not either. These are merely quiet reflections inspired by an incredibly beautiful Autumn day.

Msgr. Leo Mahon died on May 20, 2013 at the age of 87 in the winter of his life. He was a great friend and I miss him very much. God Bless Msgr. Mahon.

In a summer day reflective mood,

Fr. Greg

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“I told my luggage that there will be no vacation this year. Now I’m dealing with emotional baggage!”