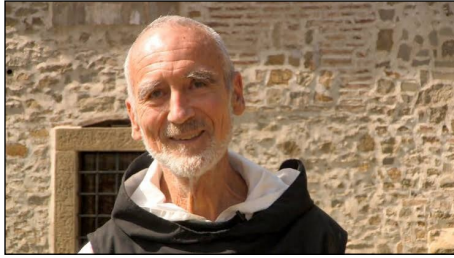


News for Life after 55

Are You Reawakening to the Great Song?

Hi everyone. This material comes directly from Brother David Steindl-Rast's beautiful YouTube video on the Great Song filmed at the Le Celle Franciscan monastery in Italy. He refers to the Divine as God, please substitute whatever word speaks to you.



Above all the turning and changing wider and freer remains your song. God with the lyre, God with the heart. Sufferings have not been learned, loving has not really been learned. What separates us in death has not been unveiled, but the Great Song above the earth hollows and celebrates it all.

In another poem, Rilke says, I live my life in big circles that surround all things, that circle around all that is. Maybe I will not complete the last circle, but I will attempt it. I circle around God that ancient tower. I have been circling for centuries and millennia and I still do not know if am a falcon, a storm, or the Great Song.

walking my dog as the sun rises and watching the pink and blue colors of the sky and listening to the birds in the trees as the seagulls cry overhead. Maybe it is starting the morning with a favorite cup of tea watching the morning light coming through the window. Maybe it is getting out and moving your body in a way that brightens up your whole day.

Retirement gives us the simple moments of exchange with the life all around us just as when we were kids. Eating a warm ripe apricot off our neighbor's tree or spending the afternoon tending the plants in our garden. Maybe it's watching YouTube videos learning the art of sour dough bread making and afterwards taking a bite into a warm slice of your own fresh baked bread. Or taking a hike mid-day along West Cliff Drive feeling the fresh breeze off the ocean, looking out over the wide expanse of blue, and watching the pelicans fly by in formation.

In retirement, we also have time to explore our favorite things—maybe its following up on an earlier interest in pottery or picking up a brush to explore painting. Maybe its joining with others in creating collages at Tumbleweed art studio on Friday mornings or mentoring young girls in math and the sciences before their fears step in.

As we explore our world in retirement, I wonder is it the exploration that touches our heart or the doorway that opens in doing so that lets us be part of the universal song? Or is it both?

A mystery solved

I spent my grade school years in Grace Lutheran church and school in San Mateo singing all those years in the choir up in the choir loft. Then, three decades later, at the start of my forties, I came into some money. I unexpectedly moved from Berkeley my old college town to Marin and decided to take a year off. I longed to sing again so I signed up for singing lessons and joined a College of Marin choir—only to discover that I didn't have a very strong voice. This truth was brought home to me when I went to a singing party in Berkeley with my best friend and at the end of the evening, the host went out of his way to warmly invite my friend to come back, but said nothing to me as I stood by her side.

What is the Cosmic Song?

There really is only one song—it is the great song, the cosmic song. It's the song that all things and our animals and our plants and our humans sing in their deepest heart. And every song that a human sings with his or her voice is only an expression of that one great song that is there from the beginning and will be there after the end. The Great Song, the great song comes out of the silence or it isn't the Great Song. If you listen deeply to the silence within then you find that song.

Saint Francis was the great troubadour of God. He came out of the silence after weeks of solitude in Assisi and then he sang the love of God that was so filling his heart that it had to overflow. He would hold one stick as a fiddle and another as the bow and he would just sing to God the great song that was overflowing in his heart. If we can learn that if we can start with the silence then we too can make with two sticks the most beautiful music in the world.

Rainer Maria Rilke speaks about the change that is happening all the time



around us. He says even though the world changes like cloud formations all that is fulfilled returns home to the one changeless one.



Each one of us, says Brother David, is called to become the great song that comes out of the silence. The more we let ourselves down into the silence, the more we'll become capable of singing that great song.

What makes your heart sing?



What is it that makes your heart sing?

- Surfing and sharing the ocean with the whales and other sea life
- Cooking a favorite dish while dancing and singing to a favorite song
- Feeling your grandchildren running into your arms

Retirement gives us the wonderful gift of time and our days begin to return to their own natural rhythm out of our renewed silence. Maybe your day begins like mine



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Events & Services

Explore and Celebrate the Goddesses in Older Women with Jean Shinoda Bolen, MD's book by the same title. Robin Everest is teaching this eleven-week class for women 55+ (\$130) on Fri. Sept. 11th to Nov. 20th 10:00 am to 12 noon at Capitola Recreation, call (831) 475-5935 to register starting Aug. 5th. Class limited to 6.

The Crafting Your Life After 55 Workshop — Come explore creative ways to recognize and align with your life's direction after retirement. One participant said: *Outstanding! Amazing! Inspiring!* Saturday, Sept. 19th and 26th, 10:00 am to 12:30 pm, Capitola Recreation \$73 Resident/\$93 Non-resident. Call (831) 475-5935 to register.

The Crafting Your Life After 55 Workbook

One participant said: *This was one of the best things I've done for myself since retiring. So valuable.* \$19.95 plus 6.74 tax and shipping. (Unbound budget version \$8.95 plus \$5.95 t/s) Pay using PayPal or send a check to Robin Everest 1555 Merrill St. #72, Santa Cruz, CA 55062. Please include your shipping address.

I didn't understand and it was confusing, but something kept calling me. I found glimpses of it while singing Christmas carols at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco and years later in retirement while singing Saturday mass at the Villa Maria Chapel I go to near my home in Live Oak. It was only in listening to Brother David's talk that I suddenly realized what I was seeking all along was my heart soaring as the beauty of the cosmic song swept me away in my childhood choir loft. So after years of literally seeking and wondering about my talent in singing, I learned that what I was really seeking and remembering was the cosmic song I experienced as a child singing in the choir loft.

The great song isn't about mastery, but about joy

Now that I can see with fresh eyes, I see that the great song has always been with me. And I see that this cosmic song isn't so much about skillful mastery—Saint Francis just had two sticks—but about joy. It is about the joy that arises in our heart when Life touches us and we touch Life. And I see now that this often happens when I am doing my favorite things.

As a girl growing up in San Carlos, I would crank up the stereo on Saturday mornings and sing to my favorite musicals Brigadoon and Jesus Christ Super Star as I vacuumed the living room. In junior high, I loved riding my ten speed bike down to Burton park in the evening and watching the softball game under the lights.

In my 30's and 40's, I would glide along Sawyer Camp Road at Crystal Springs Reservoir in my roller skates singing



Cat Steven's song from Harold and Maude that goes like this: *If you want to sing out, sing out and if you want to be free, be free. There's a million things to be you know that there are, you know that there are...*

Also in my 30's and 40's, I would hike my favorite trail in the Marin Headlands. About a mile in, I was always happy to round the bend and see the familiar ancient eucalyptus tree marking the start of the uphill climb.



I would sit down and lean up against my old friend enjoying the sun and have a cool drink before starting up.

What are some of your favorite things?

So these are some of my favorite memories. In reflecting back, were some of your favorite things to do? What stirred your heart when you were growing up and coming into your mid-life years?

And what are some of your favorite things starting to emerge in retirement?

In conclusion, as Brother David teaches, we join together with all of life in singing that great song that arises in our deepest heart. Shalom!