CHAPTER 1

The Two Halves of Life

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The task of the first half of life is to create a proper container for one's life and answer the first essential questions: "What makes me significant?" "How can I support myself?" and "Who will go with me?" (p. 1)

Think about your childhood faith. What do you remember believing? What was important to you? How has your childhood faith changed? How do you respond to Fr. Richard's call to make your own "discoveries of Spirit"?

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In the context of the security structures created to define tribes, loyalty, and identity, does the question, "Is that all there is?" resonate with your experience? If so, how?



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As you reflect on your life, do you see deeper meaning in your youthful life experiences than you did when they were happening? What changes do you feel called to make now that will free you up to living a larger life on behalf of the world?

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<i>"If change and growth are not programmed into your spirituality, if there are not serious warnings about the</i>
 blinding nature of fear and fanaticism, your religion
will always end up wor- shiping the status quo and protecting your present ego
position and personal advantage — as if it were
God!" (p. 11)



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How would you define "both-and" thinking? Using Gandhi, Anne Frank, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, and Nelson Mandela as examples, what do you think you might have to give up to be a truly both-and thinker?

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"You can only see and
understand the earlier
stages from the wider
perspective of the later
stages If you have, in
fact, deepened and grown
'in wisdom, age, and grace'
(Luke 2:52), you are able to
be patient, inclusive, and
understanding of all the
previous stages." (p. 9)



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In what ways could Jesus' command to "change your mind" (Mark 1:15) affect your personal journey? Spend time thinking about the difficult situations and relationships in your life that are difficult now. How might they be challenging and inviting you to change your mind?



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Experiential Exercises

• Treat yourself to a slow walk through your neighborhood. Recognize the gift of life that your breath is, and take time to think about your breathing as you

walk. Notice things of beauty that might never have appeared beautiful to you in the past. Notice things that you would not usually think of as special. How are you seeing them differently? Pick up a stone or a stick, and let it leave its imprint on your mind and heart. Think about where this object has been through time and history. When you return home, write about your experience, and call

"We all want and need various certitudes, constants, and insurance policies at every stage of life. But we have to be careful, or they totally take over and become all-controlling needs, keeping us from further growth... The most common one liner in the Bible is 'Do not be afraid.'" (p. 6)

a friend to share what you have just experienced.

• Move through the next week paying great attention to the world around you. At work, notice how inclusively people treat each other, and look for psychologically and spiritually mature behaviors. When you are waiting in a line, watch for the presence or

The Two Halves of Life



"The task of the second half of life is, quite simply, to find the actual contents that this container was meant to hold and deliver... The second half of life can hold some new wine because by then there should be some new wineskins, some tested ways of holding our lives together." (pp. 1–2) absence of patience or understanding around you. Observe families, and see if the adults show signs of compassion and empathy to the children. In your exposure to the media, watch for signs of either-or or both-and thinking. In the context of your spiritual life, listen and watch for ways that you might grow in wisdom, age, and grace. At the end of the week, make

a list of your observations. What have the moments of compassion and maturity called forth from you? What about the moments that don't offer these qualities? Spend time thinking about how you could use these observations to improve the quality of your relationships and interactions.

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