

they may hang on to that precious gift—enjoying, sharing, or railing against it—squeezing the last nourishing drops from their portion.

Who are we to decide it is time for them to let go? As the mind and body fall away, it is possible that the flame within burns bright and clean. If we dismiss the disabled persons in our midst, we may hurt ourselves as much as we harm them. We may lose opportunities to be warmed and enlightened.

### DECEMBER 30

Bob asked his sons what advice they would have for others whose parents have the disease.

"Be open and accepting," the boys stated. "And be prepared for change. It is going to affect everybody! Don't take your family for granted."

What follows is an excerpt from "Thine Is the Power, but What about Mom?" by the Rev. Jill Geoffrion dedicated to her mother-in-law, a victim of Alzheimer's:

I often wonder how to react to things Mom says and does.  
My natural inclination is to pretend I didn't hear or notice,  
to look away,  
or just to smile placidly  
while I try to think of something to say  
that might make sense.  
In other words,  
my first reaction is to distance myself  
from the pain that Mom and all of us are feeling.  
I am so grateful for the times I remember  
to look her in the eyes and to connect with her  
in this simple but profound way.  
Why is it so easy to forget  
that she doesn't need me to agree with her,  
or understand everything,  
but that she longs for someone  
to value her enough to look right at her?  
What are we so afraid of seeing?

The temptation to look away  
or get away  
looms large when I feel confused, embarrassed or fed up.  
But I've noticed that when my eyes meet Mom's,  
she seems to relax.  
What a simple gift of immense value. (185-192)

### JANUARY 23

I still have the idea! I think it through until it's clear. But when I try to express it, the words don't come out right. They escape. I worry so much about using the right words and saying it right that I forget what I was trying to say.

I had an idea just now that I wanted to share with you . . . but I got distracted and can't get the idea back. It's like someone erased the blackboard before I had a chance to write it all down. I remember in third grade the teacher wrote on the blackboard, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

### JANUARY 25

Isn't it funny? When you are young, you know about death and still you think everything will be more or less the same . . . Now I think about death all the time—and endings. I'm kind of separating myself from people, things. It's not sad, really, and I still can't imagine myself not existing, but I feel removed . . . Life will go on without me.

Sometimes I wonder what is real, what has been or what will be. It's so hard to perceive not being here. All the things I've learned, done, and felt—all gone! Where did they go?


### FEBRUARY 8

Even over a few months, I can be aware of what I have lost. But I wonder why? Why do some things go and not others? It's interesting! I'm an experiment, like a rat in a maze. Watch me run around. . . .



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**ROBERT & ANNE SIMPSON**

**Augsburg**   
MINNEAPOLIS