

## **WHAT DO YOU NURSES SEE? WHAT DO YOU SEE?**

*From: Stories, Parables and Fables of life of P. Ribes, s.j.  
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### **Intent of this file.**

- ✓ *To grow in love and respect towards our Senior citizens and old folks.*
- ✓ *To get under their skins and empathize with them.*

**Note:** This Poem appeared when an old lady died in the geriatric ward of Ashiudia Hospital near Dundee. She left nothing of value. When the nurse went through her possessions, she found this poem,. The old lady's only bequest to posterity appeared in a Christmas Edition of the Beacon House News magazine of the Northern Ireland Association for Mental health.

### **INTRODUCTION**

**Though the poem was primary addressed to the Nurses of the Geriatric Home where the old lady died, it has a universal value for all of us,** specially when, we come in touch with old, diminished and handicapped folks.

Unfortunately, most of us lose our patience with the ways of the old and try to avoid them or even act rudely and insensitively with them. It's painful and trying to deal with persons who lost their memory and behave in awkward ways.

We must to be patient, sympathetic, and loving towards them and figure out what's going on in their minds and hearts. We have to remember that sooner or later we may find ourselves in the same plight.

**Reflecting** on this beautiful and touchy poem may improve the way we see them and deal with them.

## **WHAT DO YOU NURSES SEE? WHAT DO YOU SEE?**

**What are you thinking when you are looking at me,**  
Uncertain of habit, with far away eyes,  
Who dribbles her food and makes no reply,  
When you say in loud voice:  
"I do wish you'd try"  
Who seems not to notice the things that you do.  
And forever is losing a stocking or shoe.  
Who unresisting or not, let you do, as you will!  
With bathing and feeding the long day to fill.  
**Is that what you are thinking? Is that what you see?**

**Then, open your eyes, Nurse, you're not looking at me.**

I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still.

As I use at your bidding, as I eat at your will.

**I'm a small child of ten with a father and mother**

Brother and sisters, who love one another,

**A young girl of sixteen with wings on her feet**

Dreaming that soon now a lover she'll meet;

**A bride soon at twenty – my heart gives a leap,**

Remembering the vows that I promised to keep.

**At twenty-five now, I have some young of my own,**

Who need me to build a secure, happy home.

**A woman of thirty, my young now grow fast,**

Bound to each other with ties that should last,

**At forty my young sons have grown and are gone,**

But my man's beside me to see I don't mourn;

**At fifty once more babies play round my knee,**

Again we know children, my loved one and me,

**Dark days are upon me. My husband is dead,**

I look at the future, I shudder with dread,

**My young are all rearing young of their own,**

And I think of the years and the love that I've known.

**I'm an old woman now and nature is cruel -**

Tries her jest to make old age look like a fool,

The body crumbles. Grace and vigor depart,

There is now a stone where I once had a heart,

**But inside this old carcass a young girl still dwells,**

And now and again, my battered heart still swells.

I remember the joys. I remember the pain,

**And I'm loving and living life over again,**

I think of the years all too few – gone too fast,

And accept the stark fact that nothing can last,

**So open your eyes, nurses, open and see,**

**Not a crab bit old woman, Look closer see me!**

Anonymous

**POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING.**

1. What were your feelings while reading the poem or hearing it read?
2. What part o the poem touched you most? Why?
3. Do you avoid meeting the old and spending time with them? Why?
4. Are there in your family senior persons, especially handicapped, sick or with impaired haring, or fading memory? How do you deal with them?
5. Have you ever visited an Aged Home? How did you feel being with the inmates?
6. Would you like to be treated –when you become old – the way you now treat the aged and diminished old persons? Why?
7. What things should you change?
8. Do you try to sympathize, better understand the old and the infirm and find out what are their problems, their worries, anxieties and fears?
9. Have you ever made a serious effort to be nice, gentle, polite and courteous with the senior citizens, specially the members of your family and home?