

# Prayer of an Anonymous Abbess

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Margot Benary-Isbert (1889-1979) was a German children's book writer. She moved to the United States from Post-war Germany in 1952 and became a United States citizen in 1957. In 1948 she wrote *Die Arche Noah (The Ark)* which won first prize at the New York Herald Tribune's Spring Book Festival. She is known for her "depictions of humane, realistic characters."

While Benary-Isbert wrote for children, I especially like her "Prayer of an Anonymous Abbess" which was written for those of us with "silver hair." It's included in *For All the Saints: A Prayer Book* for and by the Church, volume 4.

## Prayer of an Anonymous Abbess

Lord, thou knowest better than myself that I am growing older and will soon be old. Keep me from becoming too talkative, and especially from the unfortunate habit of thinking that I must say something on every subject and at every opportunity.

Release me from the idea that I must straighten out other peoples' affairs. With my immense treasure of experience and wisdom, it seems a pity not to let everybody partake of it. But thou knowest, Lord, that in the end I will need a few friends.

Keep me from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point.

Grant me the patience to listen to the complaints of others; help me to endure them with charity. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains -- they increase with the increasing years and my inclination to recount them is also increasing.

I will not ask thee for improved memory, only for a little more humility and less self-assurance when my own memory doesn't agree with that of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong.

Keep me reasonably gentle. I do not have the ambition to become a saint -- it is so hard to live with some of them -- but a harsh old person is one of the devil's masterpieces.

Make me sympathetic without being sentimental, helpful but not bossy. Let me discover merits where I had not expected them, and talents in people whom I had not thought to possess any. And, Lord, give me the grace to tell them so.

Amen!

