

Rev's Reflections

The Absence of Narcissus

I forgot the paperwhites.

Every year at the end of October, I get a half dozen bulbs of *narcissus papyraceus*, common name "paperwhite," and put them in a tall cylindrical glass vase atop a layer of stones, and just enough water to nurture the bulbs to grow. If everything goes according to Hoyle, they'll bloom during the first week of December, during our celebration of Chalice Days.

During the time of year when everyone is rushing around trying to do everything, *narcissus* flowers are a reminder that — while it may look like self-indulgence — taking time for loving reflection is crucial for us to be meaningfully engaged in our own lives and the world around us.

Sometimes nurturing those paperwhite bulbs works out, but most of the time it doesn't. More likely, we'll end up with looooooong greens and flowers that don't appear until January. Or they'll bloom early and look half-dead before December arrives. And when they do bloom, inevitably, I'll be reminded that yes, in fact, they do stink a bit.

But it's okay. No symbol is perfect! Anyway, the fact of its imperfection is just a reminder that nothing in life is perfect, and that what matters is what we do with the things that don't meet our expectations. That no matter how much we plan in advance, something will happen to change everything, and we'll adapt. Because in the adaptation to circumstances we find the real meaning of our lives. Whatever it is.

So now I get to find paperwhites that someone else has prepared to bloom indoors. I get to count on someone else to do what I forgot to do. That's kind of a blessing.

In Peace,
Rev. Denis

