

November 17, 2019
Growing Together:
Living Life More Abundantly

Ancient Reading

~ *James 1:19-21 from "The Message Translation"*

Take note of this; post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear. Be slow to take offense and get angry. God's righteousness doesn't grow from human anger. So throw all spoiled virtue and outgrowth of evil in the garbage. In simple humility and with gentle spirit, let our gardener, God, landscape you with the Word, making a salvation-garden of your life.

Second Reading

~ *adapted from Norman Whirzba in "Spiritual Gardening"*

Gardening is never simply about gardens. It is work that reveals the meaning and character of humanity, and is an exercise and demonstration of who we [understand] ourselves and creation to be. It is the most direct and practical site where we can learn the art and discipline of being creatures. Here we concretely and practically see how we relate to the natural world, and to other [living things].... Gardens are a microcosm of the universe in which all the living and nonliving elements of life meet, elements ranging from geological formations and countless biochemical reactions to human inventiveness and age-old traditions about cuisine and beauty.

Gardening, besides being a practical, life-nurturing task, is also always a spiritual activity. In it people attempt to make visible and tasty what is good, beautiful, and even holy. Every act of gardening presupposes and embodies a way of relating to creation, a way that invariably invokes moral and spiritual decisions. Though membership in a garden is a given, how we will take our place in the membership is not. Our aim must be to develop into good gardeners, gardeners who work harmoniously among the flows of life, tending and caring for growth. This means that besides vegetables, flowers, and fruit, gardeners are themselves undergoing a spiritual cultivation into something beautiful and sympathetic and healthy. A caring humanity is one of the garden's most important crops.

Third Reading

~ *from John O'Donohue in Eternal echoes: Exploring our Yearning to Belong*

The ideal of community is not the forcing together of separate individuals into the spurious unity of community. The great traditions tell us that community somehow already exists. When we come together in compassion and generosity, this hidden belonging begins to come alive between us. We do not so much build community as we allow community to emerge from, among, and around us. And in order for community to emerge, we need time, vision, and a certain rhythm with each other. We often hear the phrase "Community Spirit", which recognizes that community is not so much an invention or construction of its members, but a gift that emerges between them and embraces them. We do not make community. We are born into community. We enter as new participants into a drama that is already in progress, and we are required to maintain, care for, and often reawaken community.