

## CONNECTIONS

by Jean Glaraton

*"I know it's odd, but nothing more connects me to God than digging in the garden.... many conversations occur.... and the awe of blooms is wonderful."* This text from a friend started me thinking about the myriad of ways women feel connected – to their inner spirit, to God, to other people, and to their surroundings. I started asking – and paying attention for common threads.

*"Inspiration most often comes during my quiet times. It's as if God is whispering, and I'm compelled to listen."*

*"My greatest joy is witnessing the growth of my students between September and June."*

*"Time with the Blessed Sacrament is precious to me."*

*"Honestly, it's when I'm handwashing dishes. There's just something about it that it so comforting."*

*"I've never before felt such a strong sense of the power of God as when I stood at Red Rocks."*

*I knew in that moment there had to be a Creator."*

*"Nothing compares to the feeling of crossing that finish line and knowing I did it!"*

I heard many common threads: being in a natural setting; using gifts and talents; spending time in quiet. All offer an outward expression of our connection to God. All contribute to a sense of well-being. Yet no matter how strong our connection is, how deep our faith is, life is going to present us with ample opportunity for it to be challenged. The more we can do to strengthen our connections, the more those connections will be available to us when we don't feel like we have strength, when we have to passively move through an experience.

Returning to my friend's original comment, research has proven that exposure to nature not only makes you feel better emotionally, it contributes to your physical well-being, reducing blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones. I'll respectfully disagree with her that "it's odd." Rather, I believe, "it's God." Feeling connected leads to improved health. Feeling connected grounds us and brings us closer to God and God's grace. Feeling connected is another circle of life.

*Summer challenge: Explore how you experience and maintain a feeling of connection.*

*Write about it in your journal or a blank notebook. Revisit it often.*

*In what circumstances do you feel most connected...to God and others?*

*What new opportunities can you incorporate into your life to form even stronger connections?*

**Loving God, my prayer today comes from 1 Corinthians 16:13-14.**

**May I stay awake, stand firm, be brave, and love always.**

**In Your name, I pray. Amen.**

