



August 30, 2019

Dear friends of God,

I regularly receive an email reflection from an Anglican priest and theater director in England. His name is James Roose-Evans. He has deep intuitions of how God works in silence and life. He knows what women and men of all traditions know when they grow in prayer: "Called or not called: God is always present." I appreciate his message that I am sharing with all of you about the lockdown and how it reminded us to take time for silence and to pay attention to all that goes on around us: in nature, in our hearts and in works of poetry and prose.

A message from the garden

For some 50 years I lived in an attic flat in Belsize Park Gardens, high above the tree tops. It had a balcony and often in the summer I would sleep out. At night I would lie gazing up at the brilliance of stars, the moving pageant of clouds and the changing shapes of the moon. Sometimes very early in the morning I would be woken to hear and see a flight of birds crossing the sky like some calligraphy.

In the West our relationship with Nature barely exists, which is why the National Trust has launched a major scheme to encourage people to explore the countryside. How few children today get to climb trees, kick up autumn leaves, or watch hares boxing. And while lockdown has encouraged more people to take long walks, how many actually stop to sit on a bench for say fifteen minutes, keeping very still, being aware of the life around them.

Trees alone have so much to teach us as our forefathers and mothers knew in these maxims:

What is well rooted survives.

As the twig bends so the tree will grow.

Severed branches grow again. (to all who have been wounded, emotionally or physical, such words bring reassurance.)

Every tree is known by its fruit.

A rotten tree bears rotten fruitful.

Trees are full of secrets.

It is as St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote, 'What I know of the divine sciences and holy writ I learnt in the woods and fields. I have had no other masters than the beeches and the oaks. You will learn more in the woods than in books. Trees, stones will teach you more than you can acquire from the mouth of a teacher.'

In Frances Hodgson Burnet's *The Secret Garden* little Mary, the orphan, asks her guardian if she may have a piece of earth. 'A piece of earth?' he repeats. 'Yes,' she says, 'to plant things in, to make things grow.' He replies 'Child, when you see a piece of earth, take it and make it come alive!'

Which is exactly what Mary, aided by Dicken and Colin, does when they discover the secret garden. They weed it, they plant it -and then what do they do? They sit cross-legged and meditate!

And this reminds me of some words of Rumi 'When we nurture the seeds of meditation in our inner garden we begin to come alive at a deeper level than that of mere happiness. Happiness is elusive, it comes and goes. What grows and becomes evergreen in our innermost garden is contentment.'

It seemed like March was an eternity while this summer elapsed in a split second. Let us take the time that we have left before summer fully wanes to enjoy nature, take walks and simply listen to what our land might be telling us as it prepares for autumn and then the coming winter. Let us take time for silence and let us continue to hold each other close to our hearts.

It is difficult to believe that our St. Mike's kids are back in school. Whenever the school year starts there is excitement in the life that we see. Let us pray for our kids in our school, as well as those in our local public schools. May this year of some uncertainty bring them the gifts of knowledge and growth as they begin to see the gifts and talents that God has given each student for the building up the Kingdom of God.

Much love,

