

Grace Notes in Miniature

Friday, October 9th, 2020

Dear Friends:

This picture sends me back into my childhood, singing “All Things Bright and Beautiful” at the top of my lungs! Here’s a less-known setting by John Rutter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVSf5QISmA8> and a better-known version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUnQMvwaXlc>



I took this picture this morning, revelling in the breathtaking juxtaposition of brilliant blue sky and vividly-coloured foliage, and then was rather disappointed that the camera doesn’t pick up the radiance that seems to shine out of the trees when seen in person. That got me thinking about Sacraments. Some of us are old enough to remember having had to memorise St Augustine’s definition, that “A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace”. It is clear to us that there is so much more beauty in that grace than we can ever appreciate simply by looking at the ‘outward sign’, and that the deeper meaning requires us to look with the eyes of the heart.

This is a very different experience of Thanksgiving this year: I am disappointed that we won’t be gathering as a family: we have six children and their partners, and nine grandchildren – much for which to be thankful; however, the simple math makes this too large a group to gather for a meal and almost all of them live in either Toronto or Peel. That said, I am very thankful for the gifts of technology – telephone, smartphone, internet live chats – which enable us to stay in touch. And just as thankful for those who have taken time to help me learn how to connect on Zoom or Teams! Once again, a call to see more deeply than simply through the dimensions of how we are communicating.

When I was a Religious Education consultant, I used to love being on retreat with Grade two’s preparing for First Holy Communion and talking about Eucharist being a big word for “Thanksgiving”. We would then share how

going to a Eucharistic Liturgy (=Mass) was in many ways a Christian family Thanksgiving dinner where people share family stories and a meal. At a time when many of us are hungering for a return to celebrating Mass freely, it hurts that we can't gather without a lot of precautions, can't sing, can't share a hug or handshake – much as we are having to put our Thanksgiving dinner plans on hold. This is a time for us to turn to one of the techniques of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and look for all the things which we can appreciate more deeply in both contexts when we look with the eyes of our hearts. Let's take time to pray and meditate: "Blessed are You, Lord God of all Creation; through Your goodness we have....." When we hear these words, we are echoing the praise of our Jewish ancestors and their contemporary descendants, who pray, "Baruch atah, Adonai" – words Jesus would have likely heard at the Passover meal. You may enjoy this Sabbath blessing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyJglUVwrgk>



One of the gifts God gives us which we may not always appreciate is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is a real opportunity for healing and creating closer relationships with God and those around us. We are very fortunate to be able to offer an on-line session – An Important Office of Immense Love – on October 15th, from 4:30 to 6:30, with Father Joseph de Viveiros on the celebration of this sacrament. Please share this information with your staff and encourage them to sign up on Event Registration, after which they will receive the link.

May you experience some real moments of Sabbath this Thanksgiving weekend, giving thanks for the knowledge and wisdom which help us to know how to keep ourselves and those we love safer at this time of pandemic. We are a people who live in hope and, as Advent approaches may we continue to fan that hope into life.

With every blessing for a Happy Thanksgiving!

Gillian