

Wild Church
Sunday, September 15, 2024

The Aromas of Autumn

Paul Kane Park, Edmonton

Announcements

Land Acknowledgment

Calling a Circle on Sacred Land

As Earth circles our star, the Sun, so too we gather in this sacred circle. Let us gather ourselves into silence (*pause*). Listen to your heart beat. Listen to the life blood coursing through your body. Take a deep breath in (*pause*). Let a long breath out (*pause*). Feel the blessings of this moment.

You belong here. You are welcomed here. You are a part of this ecosystem. All beings welcome you, for they have not forgotten that we are all related, that we come from one dust and will return to that same dust. Take another long breath (*pause*).

As we gather here, in this sacred circle, we are entering into a relationship with Nature. We are here to re-member ourselves back to where we belong. We are here to restore a loving and kindred relationship with the rest of the natural world.

Prayer

Creator of Heaven and Earth, we sense the beauty of your Spirit here today. As we breathe in the aromas of your creation, we feel ourselves caressed like newborn children. You embrace us with the scents of life, the wondrous fragrances of Creation, the enchantment that memories of past Autumn seasons bring into our hearts and beings. As we gather here in this place now, may we shed our cares and open ourselves to the gifts you bear, to the gifts you bring, that we may be gifts also in your great Cosmos. Amen.

Bringing Our Names into the Circle

Each person is invited to say aloud their names. Following the offering of each name, all in the circle will reply:

Warm greetings to you _____. We give thanks for your presence here.

Theme Reflection

When we pay attention to the rhythms of the seasons, we learn a great deal about the ebb and flow, the rise and fall of life; about emptiness and fullness and all measures in between. Spring invites us to blossom; summer calls us to our own ripening; autumn presses us to release and let go; and winter whispers to us to rest, to release the demands of productivity and calendars and to-do-lists. Jesus of Nazareth knew the wisdom of the seasons and the need to balance serving and retreating, acting for healing and justice and reflecting for clarity of mind and spirit.

Around the great wheel of the year's seasons we have arrived at the Autumn time, when our sense of smell steps forward before all the other senses

Smell is the most rudimentary of the senses. Smell is the sense that first connected us to our mother and to the world. In a crowded breeding colony, a baby bird finds its parent by smell. When we choose a mate, we think we have made a rational, carefully thought out choice, but mostly we like our beloved's smell. We feel at home and we feel known when we are in the company of loved ones.

Smell is directly connected to the amygdala in the brain, to the primal, primitive centre of emotions. We feel a smell before we know what it is. And the sense of smell is what evokes our deepest memories. Have you noticed how a smell brings memories of past experiences to the fore, and how those memories evoke feelings?

Smell is perhaps the most personal of the senses, the most intimate. And we are saved from many dangers and from our worst selves by this sense that lies beyond intellect and reason - this sense that is filled with feeling, immersed in instinct and bathed in mystery. Pay attention to what you smell and to what those aromas evoke in you. Reflect on them from the perspective of your relationship with Nature.

There are three different ways of interacting with and responding to Nature. The first is what we might call the egoic circle - our private feelings and experiences. The second is the ecological circle - where we see ourselves in relationship to nature and the place we are in at the moment. The third is the cosmological circle which embraces everything that has ever existed and connects us to the transcendent.

Some questions to ponder as you amble in meditation today:

1. Do you have a favourite fragrance? Why do you suppose you like that smell?
2. What feelings are aroused in you from the smells of autumn? What memories do these smells call forth?
3. What might you learn from paying attention to the associations you make through your sense of smell in terms beyond your private experience, to include your relationship with Nature and the Cosmos?

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is an ancient contemplative prayer practice used to allow Scripture to speak to our hearts and to help us discover the multiple ways the Holy dwells there. It means “sacred reading” and the practice can be extended beyond the reading of scripture to that other great book of revelation - Nature. Lectio invites us to enter into silence and stillness, to listen deeply to the stirring of the Holy in the sacred texts around us.

This is a time in our gathering when we wander solo in Nature, listening for and watching for; sensing in all aspects of our senses, the wisdom, the beauty, the mystery of the natural world, as we amble.

Wander for 20 minutes, then return to the circle with the gifts you have received during this special time. You will be invited to share these gifts in the circle if you wish.

(When all have returned to the circle, invite participants to share insights.)

Blessing

“For the Senses” from To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings by John O’Donohue. Doubleday, 2008 p.40