

Summer is over!!!The hecticness of life that comes with the crowds and the swarms of people *everywhere* is done and we can now fin-al-ly get back to our normal lives ... or can we?

Fall, for me, at this time in my life, becomes a time of reassessment and reflection. The busyness of summer is over, most children have gone back to school, some of them online, others in the classroom and so the Peninsula is becoming quieter. Soon the ferry will stop running between Tobermory and South Baymouth, lessening even more the number of cars travelling the roadways. There's a crispness in the air and yet still warmth in the shorter days. All of that adds up, for me, to a very pleasant scenario.

However when I reflect on the state of God's world to day, I do have to pause and wonder. Amid climate crises - fires raging out of control, floods, heat waves, hurricanes,- social and political unrest, widespread systemic discrimination, and of course the coronavirus pandemic, one must stop and acknowledge the many issues and problems we face. It becomes difficult at times to believe, along with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that "God still has a way of wringing good out of evil."

As much as I might want to wish it otherwise, there isn't another reality, there's just the one we have now. More importantly I realize focusing on the negative impedes a healthy relationship with God. Just how can I be who I was meant to be, to be all that God intends, if overcome by the negative, I do not allow myself to see the wonders of God's creation? If I do not see and feel the joy and wonder in both nature and my fellow man?

It seems to me then, that in order to move forward, we need to acknowledge the negative but focus on developing a feeling of gratitude for who we are, where we are and all that we have been given. In learning to grow a sense of gratitude, I believe we must develop a sense of gratitude for all the bits and pieces of our lives. After all, it is silly to think that we can pick and choose which bits to be grateful for, because, to me, wholeness is just that - the whole lot. All of our experiences shape us, form us, and can help us to become all that God would want us to be. Or as we read in James (1:2-4) "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

As Christians, we believe that, always, but *especially in the worst of times*, Jesus walks with us. We are never alone. Through the sacrifice of Christ, God hurts with us. So, though what goes on around us may shatter who we thought we were, and how we did things, *it has not destroyed us*. Yes, pandemics and climate crises and unrest stretch us in new ways. In this we can find reasons to be grateful as well. Those things we perceive as negative, challenge us to be more creative, more loving. They allow us to try new ways to demonstrate loving care for each other

and the world. We should be expressions of God's creative love, both individually and as Church. Ronald Rolheiser, in his book, "Our One Great Act of Fidelity" states, "The church does not exist for its own sake. Its function is to save the world, not itself."

So, as Fall slips into Winter, let us go forward. Let us go away from all that impedes on our relationship with God. Let us go forward, finding ways to create a more just world right here in our corner of it. Let us continue, in ways both old and new, to care for nature and each other, as is fitting in this time and in this place.

Blessings, Gisèle