

“I am having wonderful dreams about God... wonderful images. God is a garden.”

These words, spoken by one of our beloved sisters a few days before her death, offer us a wealth of material for our reflection. She was in the dying process, and able to offer only a few quiet words to illuminate her awareness. We are given the freedom to explore all that these few words might mean.

First, the awareness that her last days of declining energy were filled with “wonderful dreams about

God.” As we each offer support and comfort to those approaching death, and wonder what that journey might involve for ourselves, it is comforting to know that the passage into death might include opening our human awareness more broadly to the reality and mystery of God. Perhaps this is what St. Paul meant by having the “veil lifted



from our eyes,” that we might know God as clearly as we are known by God. Along with all of the surrender required by death, there is also the promise of this awaiting treasure.

Our traditional art, in attempting to capture the treasure that is God, has focused almost exclusively on anthropomorphic images: Father, Son, King, Shepherd, Mother, Friend. All offering some insight; yet all limited in what they reveal. Jesus of Nazareth was more liberal in his choice of images for himself: door, pathway, bread of life, and his choice of

images for God's kingdom: the leaven in the dough, the pearl of great price. St. Teresa of Avila spoke of the mystery of death as "a drop of water falling into the ocean." There are many, many ways of speaking about God.

So, what is offered to us in imaging God as a garden? Certainly, in this height of summer, it is worth spending time in a garden to consider: freshness, growth, abundance, diversity, harmony, interdependence, patience, thirst, fruitfulness. Have you noticed that there is a hum in a garden? A resonance that is tangible; the sound of insects and more than insects; the sound of life, a field of energy; the sound of God? Have you noticed that there are thousands of ways to highlight beauty in a garden? And that even in the most unkempt of gardens, beauty survives, even thrives, though totally unnoticed by passersby.



If your focus was to emphasize "Godliness" in your garden, how would you proceed? Or is the mystery of God already inherent in your garden; not by your doing, but by its very essence? Perhaps, like the sculptor who recognizes the image already in the wood or clay and works simply to free it for clear view, the gardener is wise to recognize the Godliness already present within his/her plot of earth, and simply work in harmony with God, freeing the qualities described above for clearer view. Can we, even while on earth, work in such intimacy with God? Happy gardening!

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Photos: St. Mary Organic Farm 2010