

A Time for Every Season

By Christine Loughlin, OP

The compost pile is heaped with dry, withered plants, a testament to the abundance of the past three months. Acorn, butternut, spaghetti squashes, curry pumpkins, 750 pounds of harvested potatoes are in the basement. The garden produced enough to feed eleven households and more this summer. The hardier greens continue to thrive through the light frosts, while the carrots and turnip stay safe in the still soft earth. Our shareholders came for the last time on Tuesday. As I layer organic kitchen scraps with the spent plants into pallet bins, I am caught by the deep mystery of transformation. The minerals and microbes, the sun and winter rains, will transform the huge heaps into rich compost for next year's garden.

Jean-Claude Bourrut, our gardener, designed and constructed a fine greenhouse that sits on an old cement slab, a remnant of Crystal Spring Farm of the past. We do not know the history of the earlier structure, but we sense we are building upon a firm foundation from the past. Our good friend, Tom Metcalfe, laboriously dug and ran a ground wire from the house to the hoop house, and garden intern Rosemary Johnson carried compost and soil for the seed trays that Jean-Claude had constructed. The trays sit upon 35 large blue barrels filled with water to provide passive solar warming for the plants.

All this has happened here as construction crews widen Route 1. A new 150-store outlet mall opened two miles up the road just off the interstate. In the other direction a huge storage facility is the welcome sign into Plainville. We observe this "development", and we ask - what is our purpose here? What is our work on this 40 acres of woodland, meadow and recovering garden? As I lug the once-green vines into the compost, I ponder the connections in my life that fold into the story here.

When I was 9 years old I wanted a bike for Christmas. In the early 50's, that time before consumer goods, such wishes did not always materialize. I had a sense that no bike was forthcoming, and I had a heightened sensitivity not to persist. Our parish was having a Christmas bazaar, and my older brother and his friends were hangin' out on the last night. He had 25 cents in his pocket and the bus fare home was 10 cents. The grand prize was a bike. He did not want to take the 25-cent chance, but the parish priest pushed. He put down his last quarter. My brother rode the bike home!

I loved that red Schwinn. I could ride it from Watertown up Route 20 into Waltham and out into Wayland and buy ice cream at Higgins Dairy. I rode past farm land and open space pedaling along a two lane road over the green bridge and into the countryside.

I remember when Route 128/1-95 was built. Now it is outdated as a super highway. I have witnessed the construction of I-495. With each enlarging arc the local farmland, the source of our food, has been replaced by sprawling suburbs, industry, commercial. Offices, shopping centers and strip malls. With each push to develop has come our separation from the natural world. We come home to these 40 acres and we ask – what are we to do?

One sure response is to rethink our food source. That is what Crystal Spring Community Supported Garden is all about. What we do here matters very much. We have come to a consciousness that knows the water and soil, the trees and wind are as sensitive to our actions as we are to their forces. In developing our garden we are rethinking and relearning an intimacy with the natural world. Eating from our own back yard is a profound spiritual discipline that opens our awareness to see with new eyes the critical questions of this place and nourishes our souls to seek the ways to respond.

As we all gather with family and friends to celebrate Thanksgiving, may we sense the deeper meaning of our food as nourishment of body and spirit, a nourishment that feeds our souls to make the journey into the coming darkness of inner reflection and renewal. Only those who walk in darkness will see the light of rebirth.

We look forward to celebrating with you on the Winter Solstice the profound mystery of Earth's transubstantiation. On this darkest night we are on with all of life in recognizing our utter dependence on our great sun star. Blessed season to all! ■ CL