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# Trees Can Be Good Teachers

Nazareth Campus is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year as an acknowledged Tree City USA. The care the Sisters of Charity give the thousands of trees is a gift to us all.

I get to walk on campus a good bit and so pass close to a hundred or more trees on any given errand. It seems to me trees can teach us all a number of things. Among their lessons.

Given that I could count on one hand this Autumn the number of fallen leaves I saw that were spot free, the trees seem to be saying, "We are not feeling well..." That is of interest — especially given that trees are generally considered to be the lungs of our Earth home, taking in carbon dioxide and "exhaling" oxygen.

To me trees witness to faithfulness. They are "always" there, just standing there, going through their seasonal cycles of life and death. We humans move around, but can "be there" for others, too.

Trees are very locally situated and affected by much larger dynamics. Take acid rain for example, from power plants in varying distances to our west. We all are subjected to larger developments, whether we pay attention to them or not.

Especially in Autumn in this Global North, trees witness to the beauty and power of diversity. One hardly thinks about it during winter and summer, but the range of springtime greens and blast of autumn glory reminds us that diversity can be so beautiful, a great gift! Blessed are we if we carry that wisdom to life in our human community.

Word is, each leaf is unique, granted some generalized shapes specific to various types of trees. Again, creation is richly diverse.

With trees, we see trunks, branches and leaves; but

it is the roots that feed the whole operation and thus are fundamental to tree existence. In very late autumn and all winter we can really see tree branches earlier hidden by leaves. Blessed are we humans if we look beyond surfaces to the quality of the soul of one another. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. has been so powerfully eloquent in this call to wisdom.

Trees need time to grow. For our society that prizes "fast service" — a reminder that some very important processes just take time.

Given this time needed to grow, we need to take great care of trees on this planet. Logging needs to be carefully and scientifically guided, as does any removing of trees to get cleared land to grow other vegetation, taking them down to pave over ground, build over — all needs to be done with eyes wide open and heart sensitized to the cost of what we are doing.

Trees don't discriminate against their observers or those who can benefit from their shade. Another wholesome line of reflection for us who too often discriminate for useless or harmful reasons.

All in creation is so connected — at least on this planet. Those trees and my lungs have a very important relationship. I may have intellect and free will, but without good air, I am very significantly impaired (to understate the situation).

If we didn't have trees, what would so many of our dear birds and squirrels do?

God is terribly smart. All creation is just amazing. Trees certainly add their bit to this lesson!

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