Reflection on Summer from Macrina Wiederkehr: 14th July 2021 Sr Marie

Opening words: This week, we have a transcript. We have attached some pictures/ resources to help you in your meditation. If you are meditating alone but would like to feel 'with us' we meditate at 7.30pm on Wednesday in our homes during this time of pandemic. The tradition we meditate in is Centring Prayer which is fully inclusive of all traditions of Christian Meditation and welcoming of World Traditions.

Welcome to Christian Meditation in the Centring Prayer Tradition: A very warm welcome from Fiona, Marie, Rob, Hazel and Paul, the leaders of the Christian Meditation group at Wisdom Centre, Romsey. The whole session is about 50 minutes. We meditate beginning with an opening prayer followed by reflections and then 25 minutes of silence. We hope you enjoy your meditation with us.

Opening Prayer: *Eternal God,* through our meditation may the ears of our hearts be attentive to your Word. May we seek and find You. Awakened to Your presence may we be joyful, embodying peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-awareness. May we follow Your teaching, seeking also, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and Mothers. May we, therefore, commit to community, love of earth, peace and justice making. **Amen**



Last year around this time I presented a summer meditation using some readings from Macrina Wiederkehr. She writes so simply and beautifully to really give us a taste of God and creation. Today, I am using another of Macrina's texts from summer as a Season for Living, from the book *Circles of Life*. She writes "Today I've come out from behind my walls, away from my office. It is summer, and in spite of the heat, I feel strangely happy. Instead of writing this in an air-conditioned office, I have chosen to be outside where summer's breath insists that I drink from the cup of reality. As I sit here in this large earth-sauna, in the shade of my favourite sycamore tree, I am suddenly aware of how I have distanced myself from nature. As I listen to summer's call I discover that I have lost part of myself behind walls. I have been housed too well. Walls have made me a stranger to the earth. My office sometimes makes me feel more important than I am, and I lose sight of essentials. One of those essentials is touching the earth. Summer invites me to plant my feet upon it again."

The gardens of the Daughters of Wisdom in Romsey, are bursting with an abundance of summer's life just now and last weekend were part of the self-guided walk organised by the Romsey Festival along with nine other gardens in the town. A real taste of summer, of Wisdom's abundance, of the beauty of creation, a feast for the eyes and for the heart….

Macrina writes, "The best teachers to help us enjoy summer are little children. They do not yet work in offices. They do not own calendars with tasks crying out to be done. I love to see the parks fill up with young life each summer. The children's return to the earth is a good example for their elders. And so when school is out, summer's children swarm the streets, parks, pools, lakes and campsites. I am joining them for a day, lest I grow old before my time.

Under the sycamore tree, far away from my childhood summers, I am lost in reverie. It is not swimming pools and city parks that I remember. I see the creeks and forest swimming holes of long ago. These are some of the memories that speak to me of my childhood summers: bare feet in the creek bed, tadpoles and tiny fish swimming between my toes, the challenge of catching crayfish, watching for snakes, hanging from tree

branches and jumping into refreshing pools of water. The forest and the meadow were my office. That's where I did my best work. Some grownups tend to be obsessed with making a living rather than making a life. They become preoccupied with having a reason for doing whatever they do. Children need no reason. Life is the reason. Thus children can more easily live from the centre, from the heart. It is a purer kind of living. It is living in the moment.

'Sacramental' is the word I would choose to describe my childhood summers. A sacramental is a tangible symbol that leads one into a sacred presence. As I continue my reflections on the gifts of summer, my memory goes back to some of those summer sacramentals.



I recall the 'thump, thump, thump' of tapping on the watermelon trying to discern if it was ripe. In Forrest Carter's *Education of Little Tree*, there is a charming scene in which Little Tree's grandfather teaches him when a watermelon is ready to be plucked from the vine. Learning to listen to *sounds* is the key. "You have to know what you are doing to thump test a watermelon and make any sense of it. If you thump it and it sounds like a *think* it is total green; if it sounds like *thank* it is green but coming on; if it goes *thunk* then you have got you a ripe watermelon. Grandpa thumped the watermelon. I thumped it hard. He didn't say anything, but I was watching his face close and he didn't shake his head, which was a good sign. It didn't mean the watermelon was ripe, but no headshake meant he hadn't given up on it. He thumped again. I told Grandpa is sounded quite near a *thunk* to me. He set back on his heels and studied it a little more. I did too. He said as near as he could tell, it was a borderline case. He said the sound was somewhere between a *thank* and a *think*. I said it sounded like that to me too, but it appeared to lean pretty heavy towards the *thunk*."

Macrina continues: That story brought back memories of my own summer living and listening to the watermelons. After the ripest one was selected, I remember that earthly, sacred moment of eating the melon. Outside under the tree we sank our faces into that red-green world of sweetness. The earth was our table. It was a far cry from a seven course meal when you have to keep one hand in your lap.

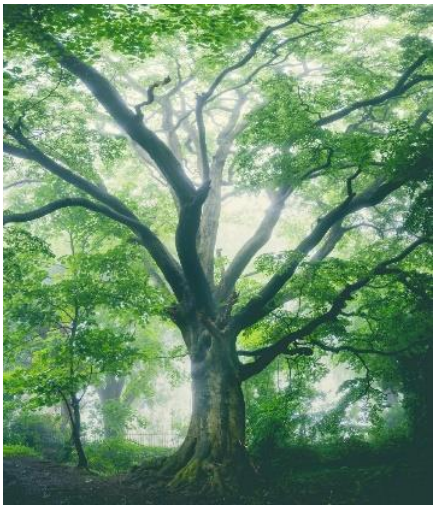


The feel of my bare feet in the grass is another happy memory. Today I can scarcely believe I darted through the tall grasses without a thought about snakes and ticks and harvest mites. I think Earth heard me coming and rejoiced at the thought of me walking on her sacred body. "This is my body" she proclaimed, "and you are a part of the soil of my soul." I didn't hear her voice back them. I didn't need to hear it because I had not yet distanced myself from her. I was obedient to an inner call. Today our scared Earth is having a greater challenge in getting us to hear her voice.

At night there were a thousand little things singing from the trees. The night sounds of the locusts delighted me and lulled me to sleep. "Resurrection bugs" we children called them .We would find shells they had shed hanging on trees. We decided that somewhere along the way they climbed out of them like Jesus coming out of the tomb. That's why they were singing. It was their Easter cry. This was our childhood theology. Forget about being politically correct. We gathered mounds of "resurrection shells" during those wonderful months. Thankfully they have all returned to the soil.

Those were the days when I prayed summer without knowing it was a prayer. This was sacramental living at its best. All those liturgical processions through the fields and forests enriched me. With my whole being I was proclaiming the gospel of daily life. What I miss most from those childhood summers are the porches. They were like outdoor chapels where the family was brought together. Porches were places where, on lucky summer nights, breezes passed through. There were stories, songs and games. We took turns on the porch

swing. What the world needs now is a place with more porches, a world where people do not have to be afraid to sit on them.



How easily the seasons speak to me of God! Yet, as I sit here underneath my sycamore tree experiencing the heat and longing for rain, I realise I do not have the same fondness for summer that I had as a child. My childhood summer memories do not even include a thought of heat. I simply do not remember being hot. I was so involved in life I did not have time to notice the discomfort. Summer was a celebration of life. It was the time I lived most intensely, holding nothing back. It was the season of total commitment to life. I joyfully participated in the sacrament of summer because I was still in the process of receiving the sacrament of childhood. As a child I was quite successful at living the life fully because I had not yet learned to live by the calendar. I lived by heart.



Joyce Rupp, the co-author of *The Circle of Life*, mentions her memories of summer, mostly filled with inviting images: "the smell of the newly mown alfalfa field was perfume to me; the star studded sky at night was an orgy for the eyes. I could lie for hours gazing at the beauty of the heavens. The sky had an immense clarity on the farm where no city lights took away the glimmer of the vivid constellations. Because of so many cherished childhood memories summer continues to draw me to the expansive outdoors. I find myself feeling cheated when it rains too much in summer, or I have too much work to do to allow me to spend time outdoors. For it is there, amid the early chirps of robins at dawn and the first twinkle of fireflies at dusk, that I am energized and filled with contentment."

Summer Stars by Joyce Rupp

A quiet sense of oneness
Ripens in me as I gaze
Into evening's summer sky.

I behold this endless space
Filled with sparkling lights,
Speaking of a world unknown,
Luring my heart into mystery.

Dance of the stars,
I am at home with you
When I view these galaxies
Of ageless beauty.

Without a breath of help from me
The heavens display their splendour
Their twinkle and glow sparks joy,
Ignites hope in my humbled heart.

When I doubt your presence
I need only step into the night
And behold the stars beyond me.
One look assures me of presence.
One gaze enwraps me with awe.

Play mate of the Pleiades,
As you roam amid the stars
Beauty settles in my soul,
And peace comes drifting in
With the gift of gentle greeting.

Ann Wroe writes last week in the Tablet in her summer reflection: "The sea is all the book I need. The tumbling of the waves, their singing, building and breaking, the surface cross hatching and the sinews of deep currents, the subtle encroaching and withdrawing are mesmerising. All this fascinates me now just as much as when I was a child…When I am marooned inland, I find myself looking for the sea. I need that frame and ending, which is also a beginning, at the edge of a scene. All our silliness and fun just flecks the fringe of it; beyond it is all immensity and majesty, each sea flowing into every other. Turning round once as I crested that hill, I seemed to hear the sea declare: "I am." It did not speak merely for itself.

Beginning Meditation:
As I come to meditate, I take a few moments to reflect on my mood. Whatever I feel, I am here now, hoping to hear God speak to me through the words I have read. To help me be more receptive, I take a couple of deep breaths, then breathe normally. What are some childhood memories that suggest I once knew how to live by heart? I look around outside. What colours and sounds of life do I see? I use the growing season outside to help me pray with the growing season inside myself. I may like to focus my attention on a favourite object, or perhaps a favourite refrain or perhaps the flickering of a candle, or an image of summer….

25-minute meditation begins

Post meditation: **O Antiphons for Summer**

O Breath of summer
Come, come with your warm winds,
Breathe on all within us that resists growth.
Temper our desire to be in control.
Raise up some wildness in us. O Come!

O Fireflies of beautiful evenings,
Come, come enchant us with your mystic dance.
Brighten our evening with your little lights.
Lead us away from day's duties
Lift our spirits in your carefree flight. O come!

O Garden of plenty
Come! Come bless us with your wealth.
Sustain us with your abundance.
Remind us of the world's hunger.
Nudge us to give from our fullness. O Come!

O dazzling sun,
Come! Come with your golden rays.
Anoint us with your energizing beams.
Recharge us with your radiant vitality.
Refresh our overworked spirits. O come!

O long days of extended light,
Come! Come with your wide expansive arms.
Open our eyes to the daily miracle of life.
Slip into our distracted hearts with every dawn.
Expand our ability to see beauty in our world.
O come!

O summer word of God,
Come! Come with your transforming breath
Breathe on us until we are ripe with life.
Fire us to be light of the world.
Nourish us with your healing rays. O Come!

Closing prayer: Loving and Eternal God, we thank you for the gifts of prayer, meditation and contemplation. We thank you for being with us and for this community. May we, therefore, pray with all others, as one community, one world and one spirit to One God…Take some time for your personal prayer …**Amen**

Thank you for meditating with us, please join us again soon.

Resources: *The Circles of Life*, 2005, Joyce Rupp and Macrina Wiederkehr
Beside the Sea, Ann Wroe, The Tablet, 3rd July 2021
Pixabay images



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