

Along the track

The Challenge of Spring

See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Song of Songs 2:11-13

As spring begins, the days are getting longer, the sun just that little warmer and signs of new life are emerging. Spring has come again and the earth and creation are being renewed around us. We give thanks for this gift of new life, for the reminder of the cycle and the wisdom of creation.

Spring is a vivid reminder of the power of the Spirit moving across the abyss at the dawn of Creation. Out of that darkness, life emerged. All things seen and unseen came into being. The colours and myriad shapes of spring, the trees, plants, flowers blooming in ways that defy description, remind us of the extraordinary generosity of God. For many birds and animals, new life begins and the cycle of life continues. It is a time of rejoicing, of new beginnings.

Spring is a time to trust, to learn from the land. Every seed has its own time of germinating and growing, just as we do. Every tree and bush will flower in its own time. We must wait patiently and hopefully. That cycle reminds us of the inner journey that each person must take, to be open to the gift of God's grace within, to be open to the seeds of faith which lie within, to allow them to grow and flourish.

As it is outside, so it is inside. The Spirit created the seen, and the unseen. It is a time for wonder, a time 'to cultivate our dreams'. It is a season of joy, a time for renewal. It is a time to strengthen or even awaken faith and trust in God's enduring presence and purpose. The Spirit, who lives within our hearts, fills us with the fire of faith, and inspires us (if we are open to it), to be God's hands, feet, mouth, and heart.

It is a time of revival for hearts and minds.

Spring is a time for cleaning out and making way for fresh possibilities and new commitments. It's a time to revive our appreciation of what is good and positive, a time to look for new growth, to

look for what is beautiful in our own lives and to expand our horizons. It is a time to reflect that "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5) and ask the Spirit to make us worthy of this earth and inspire us in how we care for it, in what we sow and in what we reap, in what we plant and in what we prune.

It is the Season of Hope. As we plant seeds, and water, and wait for signs of new life, the season of spring asks us to reflect on how we see the world we live in. Are we pessimistic, with eyes and minds fixed firmly on restoring the glories of the past or are we people of hope, people with faith and confidence that God is present in our world, despite its troubles and strife. In the words of Pope Francis: "We see the sprouts of a new world rather than the yellowing leaves on branches. We do not delude ourselves in nostalgias, regrets and laments: we know that God wants us to be heirs of a promise and tireless cultivators of dreams."

Is my soul in spring or in autumn? he asks. "Of spring, that waits for the flower, that waits for the fruit, that waits for the sun that is Jesus, or of autumn, which is always with a face looking down, embittered and, as I've said sometimes, with the face of vinegar peppers."

To be tireless cultivators of dreams takes courage, imagination and confidence in a loving God, to be followers of those apostles who responded to Jesus' call to come with him and step out into the deep.

A final thought from Pope Francis: "We received this world as an inheritance from past generations, but also as a loan from future generations, to whom we will have to return it!"

What will we do about that? What kind of a world do we want to hand on to them?

Regards
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