

Good Mothers Are Good Gardeners A Mother's Day Sermon

*A sermon preached on May 13, 2018, the Seventh Sunday of Easter
at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Bedford, New York
by the Interim Rector, the Reverend Pierce W. Klemmt.*

Any gardener worth the salt of the sweat in his or her brow ...knows the importance of weeding. We are reluctant to weed because so many of them are, well, pretty. There are the dandelions, creepers, thistles, etc. I have a little saying before I weed them: "You're very pretty... but you're out of control." You will understand when I say..."I find you cannot be emotional about weeding – you just have to get down on all fours and do it." It helps to whistle the Battle Hymn of the Republic to get you through it: "...trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored." With weeding... you just must keep marching on!

I once had a next door neighbor who challenged me on my *right* to weed. He liked the little blue flowers creeping like a vast ocean across my extensive bed of roses. From his window...it looked like a sea of blue... and he was a Navy man after all. Knowing I was a priest... he...tongue in cheek... challenged my right to weed: Who was I... after all... to determine who would remain in the garden and who would not? "Sir, I am the gardener," I replied. "I have a responsibility for *everything* in the garden... not just one plant. My little blue flowered creeper can't run rampant and threaten the health of all my other flowers, tomatoes, and beans. Weeds, sir... it turns out, are plants that have a hard time with limits." You court martial them in the Navy. I yank them in my garden.

This same garden dynamic happens with people... especially groups of well-meaning people that NEED to be nice to each other. Country clubs...garden clubs...bridge clubs...farmer's club...most of all churches... are good examples. Sometimes... there is an individual whose need for recognition and attention is greater than anyone can supply... and that person then begins to act like a weed... taking over everything and dominating. Of course... they mean no harm... but they can inflict misery on the group. These people aren't evil... they just aren't thinking clearly. Their own neediness clouds their good intentions.

Happily... we have leaders who know when limits need to be set... much to the dismay of those who... like a weed... try to overtake everything and make everyone see

things from their point of view. Many of us are compliant and will let them... like a weed... continue their obtrusive behavior... suggesting they probably had it hard in life... and this is simply their way of acting out. But then everybody begins to realize they don't enjoy the activities in which everything has to be about THEM.... and people stop coming. This is when the weeds have overtaken the garden.

Weeding makes me think of Mother's Day. No kidding. Think about it. Good mothers are good weeders. As in a garden... in families... there are struggles for dominance that mothers mediate. Mothers must balance the needs of all family members... encouraging each to bloom in turn... protecting and balancing each child's time in the sun...or in the spotlight...or...for the incorrigible... within eyesight. As the emotional gardeners of their families... mothers help ensure that all the children and their children's friends flourish. Never do we become more god-like than in this motherly role. So today...Mother's Day... call your mom on the phone... or simply remember your mother... and thank her for regulating the growing environment that made you such a beautiful...fragrant flower.

For those of you who had mothers that acted more like weeds...don't feel guilty or slighted. Given the circumstances...they probably did their best by what was given to them by their own mother. But lucky for you...you would not be sitting here to today...if somebody down the line... didn't take the time to turn your petals toward the sun!

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!