

Sowing and Reaping

When I first saw two green beans next to two green tomatoes in my small backyard garden I was elated. The blossoms that promised produce were also turning into cucumbers and watermelons. Even the zucchini and peppers that the deer had chomped down were making a come-back. I felt like I was a real farmer! I told myself that I had outwitted the deer with garlic and human hair gathered from a local beauty salon—at least for a while. I was the master of my backyard though the wild-life disagreed. I had prepared the soil, planted the seed, watered and waited and the seed, it seemed, grew by itself. The harvest promised to be tasty and abundant.

Jesus described what really happens—without my God in Mark, chapter 4: “This is how it is with the kingdom of God;* it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come.”

What impact does our “sowing” in our every-day lives really have? Do small often unconscious acts make a difference? The answer is in the question about whether a small drop of water makes a difference in the ocean. While at first glance it seems that it has no effect, the reality is that it affects the drops of water above, around, next to... One small drop of water has a powerful effect on the ocean.

And what are the effects of our sowing? Is there a tasty and abundant harvest waiting? I believe there is. We might not often see it ourselves, but it's very real nonetheless. I had the privilege of working with alcoholics and addicts and had the job of imparting

education and insights about staying sober, but I learned that it was often not the profound things, but the small “seeds” sown through attention, listening, and respect that made the difference. I recall being in a restaurant one day and a former client came up to me. “Do you remember what you told me?” he asked as I was struggling to remember his name let alone what I had said. He went on to talk about how a casual remark of mine that I had long forgotten helped him make the choice for sobriety. I planted the seed though I didn't realize it at the time, forgot about it, and God yielded the harvest.



A very wise friend who served as my spiritual director for many years died this summer. A Jesuit priest, he had been a successful educator in high schools and colleges, a campus minister, a leader of retreats, and in his final years, worked with alcoholics and addicts. He was present, an excellent listener, a holy man who could be both challenging and supportive. I always knew where he stood. He wore no masks. He hated hypocrisy and injustice. He loved God mightily and lived in trust. He loved the vision of church alive at St. Leo's and was a cheerleader for my ministry here. He sowed lots of seeds in our meetings together. The harvest of those times is still unfolding. I had the privilege of visiting him two days before he died. He was frail and weak, but still present. I thanked him for the blessing he was in my life. “It was blessing to me, too,” he whispered in a shaking fading voice. Maybe that's key to the harvest. I give to the earth as I plant seeds, weed, and water. I give to and receive from others through small acts and presence. Then God takes those very small things and brings about an abundant harvest of mutual blessings.

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate