



Journal

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**STARCROSS
COMMUNITY**

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ANSWER TO AN EMAIL FROM AN UNKNOWN FRIEND ...

Brother Toby, keep sending things! We were doing ok but are hard hit now. I have never been to Starcross but it is part of my life. At this time it really helps to know there is more to existence than my struggles and fears. What is going on there?

Our Sunday Service was inspired by a thin slice of green apple in a salad on Friday. It had been a tough week. Temperatures all in the upper 90s. Essential systems, including water, had broken down. The mid-summer tasks of Olive groves, orchards, garden, maintenance needed attention NOW. How do you construct a sacred gathering out of experiences like that?

Back to the thin slice of unripe apple. We won't harvest apples for a month, but Holly wanted a sharp tang for the salad. She cut the slice so thin you could see through it. And it added a wonderful zest. Could we do the same for this overpowering period of summer? Cut a very thin slice?

Summer is a time we DO things. But what about finding a way of having a greater awareness of the physical and spiritual parts of our environment that do not require us to do anything?

We gathered on Sunday just after dawn. The air was refreshing, not oppressive as it would be at mid-day. When we rang the bell it woke up a few late-sleeping birds in the olive trees. They joined those already gracing the sky.

On Saturday afternoon we had cut the bloomed-out roses and collected a large basket of petals. These we silently spread on the deck around the chapel. Then we just stood there, among the petals, and looked out across the fields and to the forested hills beyond. All was still and cool. This is the part of our life we had been overlooking in the frenzied week before.

We went into the chapel, sang a psalm, and listened to a gospel reading. In the hopelessness after Jesus' death, some of his followers had spent the night fishing. As they came to shore

they found Jesus next to a little charcoal fire, cooking fish. “Come and have breakfast” he said offering bread and fish. Here on this simple graveled beach with this exhausted and sweaty congregation was a holy communion more powerful than anything to be experienced in the mighty cathedrals since that time.

The reading brought to mind a recent experience of watching a hospital ER staff coming off duty at 7AM. As they dragged themselves into the cafeteria, a gentle, smiling, Latina woman came out from behind the counter and offered coffee and rolls. Was this again the Jesus-Spirit saying “Come and have breakfast”? Was this the first Mass of the day in this metropolis?

Plastic chairs had been placed on our chapel deck. We went out to meditate, pray, reflect, dream, in the still-fresh day. For me the sound of the birds finding breakfast brought into the nowness of my existence the man by the charcoal fire and the woman with the coffee. Yet, there was no busyness. A refreshing dip into tranquility.

At some point we went inside the chapel, shared bread, wine, and a sacred moment, brought to mind all who long to be with us, listened to music, recited the St. Francis prayer --- “Lord make me the instrument of your peace”, went to a great breakfast.

Everything that happened on Sunday seemed, to me, part of the same holy and nurturing experience. Ripples and echoes from a gathering of burdened people on a gravel beach long ago? Perhaps.

Your brother,

Toby

