



In the early dawn
You can tell by the colors...
Sky changing her clothes

Issa (1763-1828) Translation Cliff Edwards

THINK OF LAVENDER WHILE ON THE BARRICADES

A young member of the House of Representatives labels the government as “fascist.” I’m not arguing with her but I do worry about her safety in these extremely troubling times. I think that most if not all of the people to whom these Friday Reflections are sent are disturbed by the lying, corruption, mean-spiritedness, lack of compassion, white supremacy, poverty, hunger, that is uncovered daily. And for those of us in Generation Ancient, we are seeing things that we have seen before and assumed we would never experience again.

Okay — there is no denying any of the above. There are going to be hard fights ahead, but it is also important to be aware that there are other stories

unfolding around us. These are the things which give us strength.

Long ago at a gathering in Norway, a French student came up to me. I had heard her speak the day before when she said she would be returning to Paris and joining students in a pro-democracy movement. She

knew there would be some danger in their activity. She looked at me, and in a strong voice, said, *“Tell me what I can think about when I am on the barricades.”* I consider that one of the most important requests that anyone has ever made of me. We had a long talk.



At this moment here at Starcross the season of Lavender has come and, staring at that sea of Lavender, I feel nature's gentle nudge to be mindful of beauty and good no matter what dark clouds the future brings.



Different types of Lavender seem to fill any empty space here and they are now in full bloom. We use it in many ways. Some is cut and tied in small bundles for people who stop by our Honor Produce Stand. Much of it is dried and put in little sachets. Some is infused with olive oil for hand lotion. Vases of Lavender appear all over the house and Chapel. A sprig can even be found



in people's hats!

Where did Lavender come from? It seems to have almost simultaneously appeared in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and India about 2000 years ago.

WARNING! Here comes one of those little journeys in spiritual history that I enjoy and generally makes the young people around me roll their eyes.

The ancient Greeks called Lavender “nardus” after the

Syrian city of Naarda where they discovered it. For many centuries Lavender was known as a sacred herb. For example, it is mentioned in the *Song of Solomon* In the Hebrew Bible (1:12),

“While the King rests in his room, my Nard yields its perfume.”

Moving over a bit to India, Lavender’s beautiful purple color is associated with the Crown Chakra which is seen as the energy center for higher purpose in life. The color itself is often associated with royalty and reverence. The *Acts of the Apostles* mentions a woman who was a maker and seller of purple cloth and an early Greek follower of Jesus (Acts 9:36–42).

Lavender received its present name from the Romans. It came from the Latin word “lavare” meaning to wash because it was used to scent baths. The Romans also used it to leave a fragrance in beds, closets and even hair. Lavender’s primary use was probably medicinal. In many cultures the oil of Lavender is still used as a disinfectant and antiseptic to soothe and heal insect bites, sunburns, small cuts and burns and even for internal conditions such as indigestion and heartburn. Some use it to relieve headaches and motion sickness and to aid in sleep and relaxation. Even today dried Lavender is put in wardrobes and linen closets for its pleasant scent. In a few countries it is commonly found in the wedding decorations. Culinary friends will be quick to point out that Lavender has been an ingredient used in the preparation of food for centuries.



Lavender is often planted alongside olive fields in Spain and in the south of France. One of the varieties of Lavender is used as a complementary crop that helps fight erosion.

So this is an ancient, useful, and even sacred herb. But that is not its main benefit for me and I suspect most people.



There are few things that uplift my spirit more than looking at a patch of Lavender in full purple bloom. There seems to be a growing opinion that trees communicate with each other. I feel the same way when I look out over the Lavender which surrounds our little Chapel. I wonder if the same could be said



of these plants. Many of nature's communities are yet to be revealed.

It doesn't take much imagination to sense some beautiful sounds going with Lavender's magnificence. I am told that some composers have experienced colors when they created their music. Could it not be possible that the reverse is true when the earth gives us all these purple instruments?

It is even more pleasant to realize that each plant remains distinct even as it blends so beautifully with all the other plants. There are at least three types of English lavender which are very practical looking. They are short and solid in appearance and ready to give themselves to medicinal and culinary use. The tall, elegant French and Provence Lavenders dance beautifully in the slightest wind, practically winding themselves into wreaths and wands. The long stemmed Spanish Lavenders make dramatic movements, perhaps they are the string instruments of this floral Symphony.

The other sound that I heard, sitting by the Lavender, was the hum of many honeybees. They were working at a frantic pace and yet I did not see a single aggressive or competitive movement. Despite their speed they worked peacefully and cooperatively together. Again I had the feeling, so often missed in today's human world, that



these tiny cohabitants of the planet greatly valued being in a community of life.

In his beautiful novel *The Overstory*, Richard Powers quotes a famous line from *Metamorphosis*, the mythological narrative of the exiled Roman poet Ovid (43 BCE – 17 CE?),

“Let me sing to you now, about how people turn into other things.”

Could it be that, like so many of us who feel exiled from our dreams of a peaceful and compassionate world–community, I am looking at a field of beauty made up of beings who were once, many ages ago, much like myself? What a silly idea!

Or is it?

Brother Toby