

# WESTON PRIORY

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## **Wisdom's Gift of Creation**



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# BULLETIN



*Ask the world to reveal its quietude –  
not the silence of machines when they are still,  
but the true quiet by which birdsongs,  
trees, bellworts, snails, clouds, storms  
become what they are, and are nothing else.<sup>1</sup>*

– Wendell Berry



## **I**N THIS TIME OF HARVEST AND THANKSGIVING, OF

Advent-Christmas celebration, we are *especially* enriched by reflections from the prophecy of Isaiah, the other prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, and by the poetry of the Psalms, so rooted in creation’s gift of the earth and the heavens and all their creatures. The Scriptures are the story of a gift that has been graciously entrusted to us – that we hold tenderly as our own body and blood, as our own very selves.

The early desert monastics were men and women whose prayer and ascetic practice were to celebrate and care for the simple and ordinary in daily life. They especially appreciated the beauty of the little, the seemingly “poor.” They found such richness and abundance in what appeared desert-stark emptiness; the simplicity of their surroundings; the vibrancy of nature and its life-forms: flowers, birds and insects – even beasts wild and tame – reflections of their own humanity; the gift of humility in personal brokenness; the utterance of a simple word or prayer; the embrace of unmerited forgiveness; the meals shared from a common pot; the mutual love shown for one another – a sign of God’s abiding presence.

Benedict of Nursia pursued this inspiration in his Rule for Monastic Life where he encouraged monks to live a life of stability – a life rooted in the soil in which they are planted; a life united with all that they have been given, be it the brothers or sisters of the monastic community or the fruits of their labor with creation’s harvest in garden or craft-shop, amidst animal care or forest wilderness.

Today, more than ever, we are invited to assume our place as responsible and gifting partners with all of creation, caring and celebrating together the beauty of every gift with which we have been entrusted, from the smallest molecule to the grandeur of the unfathomable universe. We do not stand above but *with* all created reality playing each movement in what Rabbi Arthur Green has named “the great symphony of Creation.”<sup>2</sup>

The Scriptures remind us that Wisdom has set a table and invites us to come and partake.<sup>3</sup> S(he) “peers through the lattice-work”<sup>4</sup> waiting to be discovered and embraced as the gift that each is truly becoming. Human and plant; crawling animal and flying bird; flower and stone; stars and clouds – we are gift for one another! If we are truly present and attentive in newly imaginative ways, we intuit that there is a depth of life and nourishment that we break open for each other. Manna covering the

desert sand; water gushing from solid rock; bread and fish multiplied by generous hearts; figs nourished by patient watchfulness – all so fragile and gifting – awaiting our response. Yet we know that these gifts can so easily be disregarded through careless inattention, through the hubris of placing ourselves above or over the web of life.

A few simple lines from a poem by Catherine de Vinck echo this moment of recognition in mantric resonance:

*Did you really look at an artichoke,  
at a spoon or a clay pot?  
It is so easy to discard the wine bottle,  
but it is made of green light.<sup>5</sup>*

We brothers are deeply aware that there is a growing responsibility to be faithful to the gifts we have been given. Such fidelity lies at the heart of human life and is the foundation of our monastic prayer and work. In this edition of the bulletin, we specifically reflect upon some of the gifts we have discovered in the simple and ordinary of our daily life. Creation is teaching us to be disciples. Whether gathering and cutting logs in our forest care, or being molded in humility by woods’ craft; whether celebrating light from the beeswax, or delighting in the surprises that nature bestows on those open to see anew; whether enhancing prepared vegetables from the garden harvest, or celebrating the self-giving love, bursting in vibrant autumnal color and flowering in Mayan cult, at the wedding of dear friends and family – *we know that we are gifted!*

God in Jesus has embraced our earthly flesh. We humbly rejoice and sing praise that we have been molded from the humus of the earth and that we can re-image our intimate bonds with all that is – the original vision of Shabbat in Eden and the unfolding movement towards the kingdom, becoming one family with all God’s creation.

*The window again welcomes in the light  
of lengthening days. The river in its old groove  
passes again beneath opening leaves.  
In their brevity, between cold and shade,  
flowers again brighten the woods’ floor.*

*This then may be the prayer without ceasing,  
this beauty and gratitude, this moment.<sup>6</sup> ■*

<sup>1</sup> Wendell Berry, excerpt from the poem, “Sabbaths 2001 (III)”, *Given: New Poems*, Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard (2005), p. 97

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Green, *Radical Judaism: Rethinking God & Tradition*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press (2010), p. 99

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 9

<sup>4</sup> Song of Songs 2: 9

<sup>5</sup> Catherine de Vinck, “Memorandum 66”, *A Time to Gather: Selected Poems 1966-1967*, Allendale New Jersey: Alleluia Press (1967), p. 26

<sup>6</sup> Wendell Berry, excerpt from the poem, “Sabbaths 2004 (III)”, *Given: New Poems*, Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard (2005), p. 140