

October 2020

"God is love and those who abide in love abide in God" St. Francis (1 Jn 4:16)

There is Hope.

We seem to live in a world full of chaos and everyone is frustrated. After eight months, most states are not even close to heading toward zero cases of COVID and we are learning that it might take most of next year to get there. Many people are feeling trapped in their environments, particularly as we face the return of cold weather ahead.

Because of 'Corona Vid,' as my grandchildren call it, they and their parents left their home in a large city and moved in with my husband and me. The kids sometimes ask: "Nana, am I going to get Corona Vid?" I try to change the subject. We'll read a book or walk outside so I can watch them ride their bikes. I am constantly looking for ways to add **hope** to their day.

We all need **hope**.

I encourage all to read Pope Francis' encyclical letter [*Fratelli Tutti*](#), which was inspired by St. Francis and released on October 3, 2020. St. Francis also inspired Pope Francis to write the encyclical [*Laudato Si'*](#).

This 79-page encyclical focuses how each of us has an obligation to forgive. We can all name incidents in the last several months, whether COVID related or

TREES TEACH

**A Fall Reflection by Sister
Julie Myers, OSF**

Autumn.

What do you think of when you hear the word Autumn? My mind floods with images of vibrantly colored trees, crisp mornings, chilled

nights, falling leaves, jackets, bonfires, hot chocolate, apple cider, pumpkins, corn mazes, fall festivals, harvest, animals preparing for winter, stillness, transition, shortness of days and length of nights, wind sounds, and darkness.

I must admit, as I grow older with each passing year, Autumn has become my favorite season. It's a time of beauty, transition, learning and humility. The earth calls us to herself, and bids us to slow down and take notice. She invites us into the process of life and letting go. There is great lesson here, if only we open our spirits to brilliant color and our souls to amazing courage.

My prayer nook faces a window which serves as an open view to creation on the convent grounds. There is an array of things to ponder—trees, flowers, ferns, weeds, grass, squirrels, birds, deer, raccoons, possum, rabbits, not to mention the human creatures that walk by the house. But it's the trees that have tapped my heart and often serve as a sounding board to my prayer time.

Have you ever stopped to ponder the transition and transformation of the trees this time of year? I don't mean taking quick gazes as you drive from one destination to another, or the occasional look while walking—where most of your attention is spent focused on your next step with a mind's eye to processing the day or a tough situation.



Have you taken the “stop-look-listen” position before a gathering of trees?

The time is now, the season is here, and creation calls your name! Choose a spot and settle in to just be. For observation becomes focusing, becomes meditation, becomes prayer. Take notice of the trees and their magnificent color. Put your focus on the leaves and how one by one, they slowly let go of the branch from which they found life, dancing their way down blanketing the earth.

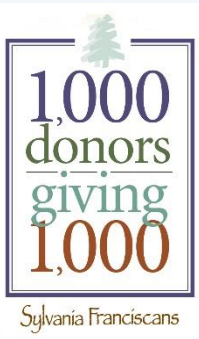
This process continues until every leaf has let go and the tree stands barren for the time of winter...trusting that spring will come and life will blossom anew. It's amazing to comprehend, yet we have the privilege to witness this process each year. What are we being called to learn from the trees, from creation?

I pose these questions for your thoughts and prayer...the next time you stop to gaze upon the trees:

- What are you being encouraged to learn for yourself from the trees' transformation of living beautifully, to dying gracefully, to letting go?
- How does the leaves' brilliant colors reflect your own brilliance and what you offer the world?
- Watching the leaves fall, think about your own life—is there something you cling to that has caused your spirit to dry up? Is there something you need to let go of?
- Do you trust that God will be there to catch you just as the earth catches the leaves?



By Sister Julie Myers, OSF



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