

ST PIUS X WEEKLY REFLECTION

Gardens & Gardening

There are many references to gardens in scripture, starting from the Garden of Eden that God provided for Adam and Eve. The first account of creation Genesis 1:29 says “I have provided all kinds of grain and all kinds of fruit for you to eat” shows a loving God concerned for our needs. (Some may suggest we should all be vegetarian). In the second account Genesis 2:7 “man is formed from the soil of the garden” - we are part of nature. We have power over it, but we are dependent on it. This highlights that we have a responsibility to care and protect the earth’s resources for our own health and wellbeing. Part of the punishment for the disobedience of Adam and Eve was to be sent out of the garden Genesis 3:23.

Today we create and maintain gardens to provide food and beauty. Most people enjoy seeing a well-planned and maintained garden. We also visit gardens, through the Open Garden schemes, National Trust etc. Many people enjoy gardening as their main pastime and those who live in apartments often have an allotment. Under the umbrella of social prescribing, many Doctors suggest gardening rather than pharmaceutical remedies, particularly for stress and related mental health problems. Jesus often uses gardening and farming analogies – the parable of the sower “a healthy tree does not bear bad fruit” etc.

Many hospitals and especially hospices invest in green spaces for patients because they recognise the intrinsic value calming and restful effects of shades of green.

In the [Song of Solomon 6:11](#) and [Luke 13:19](#), a garden is referred to as a place of shelter and shade, and also as a place of protection ([Song of Solomon 4:12](#)).

The Garden of Eden (literally the Garden of Pleasure) in Genesis Chapter 2: “The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food...” (Genesis 2:8–9).

The day before His sacrificial death on the Cross, Jesus agonized in prayer even to the point of sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:44) and said, “...My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death...” (Mark 14:34)

Christ’s submission to the will of God in the Garden of Gethsemane is described for us in the last chapter of the book of Revelation. “On either side of the river there was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” (Revelation 22:2). Compare this with Ezekiel 47:12. “Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing”.

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The Benedictine monasteries, J. J. Walsh says, became the repository of important traditions in medicine and surgery. Their scriptorium or writing-rooms preserved many of the old Greek medical writings from perishing from the face of the earth in the midst of contemporary neglect of the intellectual life during the invasion of the barbarians in the early Middle Ages. Their gardens supplied the herbs which were considered to be so precious for the treatment of the various human ills even down to our own day. The beginnings of modern medical education can be connected with monastic influence.

Isaiah 11 “The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.”

Psalms 104:14-15 “He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts.”

This scripture shows God’s intention behind creation. He provides all we need, from food to joy. Gardening invites us to be a part of this divine provision, growing our food and cultivating joy in our lives through the fruits of our labour.

Gardening can also bring deeper benefits, spiritual and psychological (reduce feelings of depression, loneliness, anxiety and stress etc). While we are planting and growing our flowers and vegetables, we learn about patience, growth, and the cycles of life. Gardens just like life, go through seasons, which teaches us to remain hopeful, even in challenging times, understanding that growth often comes with struggles. Just as we care for our gardens with nurturing hands, we too need to cultivate our faith and character.

Gardening is a beautiful metaphor for life and faith—each aspect teaches us about perseverance, hope, and trusting God in all things.

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