

ST. GABRIEL'S GARDEN



GROWING NEWS

About Our Garden Ministry

Our Garden Ministry relies almost completely on volunteer hours from our members, especially in the spring, when the contracts of the Canada Summer Grant students have not even been decided, or in the fall, when those contracts have come to an end. We are very blessed in the generosity of our membership, because this has been an extraordinarily busy growing season.

The current garden's designer, Robert Cordy, gave another successful workshop on propagation. Over 15 people attended, and everyone went home with a couple of plants for their own gardens. That same weekend, the Garden Ministry held its annual raffle, which also yielded wonderful results. This year, we sold seeds (from our garden), and sold tickets for prizes of Red and Black Currant jam—made from St. Gabriel's Garden currants!

The following weekend, the parish held a Ministry Fair. All 37 ministries of the parish set up tables to engage the parishioners, showcasing their work and opportunities to get involved. As a result, we are delighted to welcome 6 new volunteers to the Garden Ministry for next year!

To celebrate our successes, the Garden Ministry's last meeting of the year was held on December 10th, and participants shared a cheesecake to congratulate themselves on another season of work well done!

Once again, we thank our volunteers for their dedication and hard work, because of which our beautiful community gardens thrive. We look forward to presenting our 2024 agenda in February, which will be shared in the Spring Equinox issue of "Growing News".



"Growing News" is the newsletter of the St. Gabriel's Garden Ministry, published quarterly, at the turn of each season.

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Spotlight on the Garden



As all gardeners know, garden work neither depletes with the daylight hours, nor lessens as plants die or go dormant. This fall has proven to be even busier than most. Right up to the start of putting the garden to bed for the year, we were harvesting produce which was, of course, sent to the Good Shepherd Ministries to aid in their work of feeding the hungry downtown. It took three whole weekends to properly to “tuck the garden in for its long winter’s nap”, and we express our heartfelt gratitude to the numerous volunteers who contributed their time and effort to get the job done.

The newest project has been the installation of a raspberry patch. We have started with 5 raspberry bushes, hopeful that the canes will be prolific and give us another opportunity to supply our parishioners with a delicious yield, as well as provide treats for those dependent on the Good Shepherd Ministry for food.

We are grateful for the cyclical “Sabbath”, our opportunity to rest over the winter, but will be eagerly planning next year’s growing season in the meantime.

Rises and Rifts...and Hope

As 2023 draws to a close, we come to the final instalment presenting “The Stations of Our Cosmic Earth”. These last three panels of the series hang on the right side before the great south-facing window between the indoor Sacred Space and the Sacred Space of the Garden.

As we know (and experience), life manifests itself in constant change. As the cycle of life reveals, anything that is alive is far from static, moving through the stages of its particular life span according to its nature. Some life spans, like the mayfly’s, are remarkably short; others, like an oak tree’s, can last centuries. We do not know the “life span” of the Earth, but we know that it has been changing and adapting to human influence for millennia. As with the “Rise of Agriculture” in the former panel, the “Rises” depicted in these last three panels are indeed momentous.



Panel six shows “The Rise of Culture and Religion”. The title of the panel seems to suggest progress as human beings became “civilized”, developing individualized, and then collective approaches to temporal and spiritual life. From those collective approaches grew myriad different tribes and nationalities, affected by the regions they inhabited and influencing everything from their clothing and ways of living to their celebrations, food choices and cuisine.

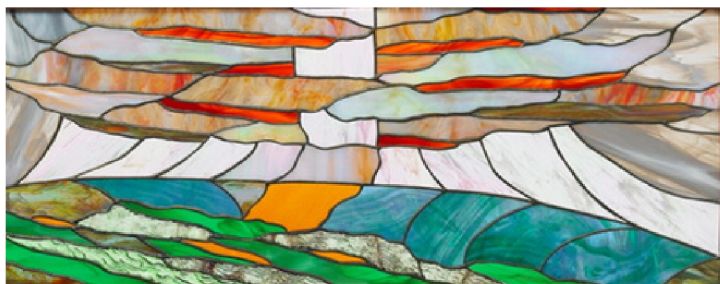
These distinctive aspects of human life became known as “Culture”, and as humans expanded their ranges and the movement between them, these cultures slowly interacted to produce the wealth of experiences we can now learn about, marvel at, and enjoy. The panel, however, draws our attention to the magnitude of those interactions.

Essential to most cultures was the rise of Religion. From the very earliest records of human existence, humans have acknowledged power beyond their own ability and understanding, and sought to find ways to explain it, and formalize it into ways of governing their lives.

In this panel we recognize a deep rift in the landscape—with a desert-scape and barren tree in the top left, and across the chasm, a blue river and the suggestion of a green landscape. The top left image suggests the symbol of “the Tree of Life”, with its strong earth tones. It could be seen as a group of bodies melded together into the trunk, the branches of the tree spreading in all upward and outward directions, the roots spreading downward and out. Looking towards the top of the human figures, one head is white and radiant, the other red and suffering – signifying the ambivalence of the human experience of both culture and religion. The ever-widening diagonal chasm separates humanity from the blue river and green landscape flanking it.

This is not to suggest that Culture and Religion are, in themselves, negative entities. Rather, it shows how humans have used Culture and Religion to emphasize that which divides us from our Earth roots.

Father Thomas Berry, CP, in his book, *The Great Work*, explains: *"We need an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process. This awakening is our human participation in the dream of the Earth, the dream that is carried in its integrity not in any of Earth's cultural expressions but in the depth of our genetic coding. Therein the Earth functions at a depth beyond our capacity for active thought. We can only be sensitized to what is being revealed to us."* In remaining focussed on just "the human" in isolation from the rest of creation, essentially the microcosm of human life and endeavour, we lose the significance of the macrocosm, of Earth's place in God's grand creation.

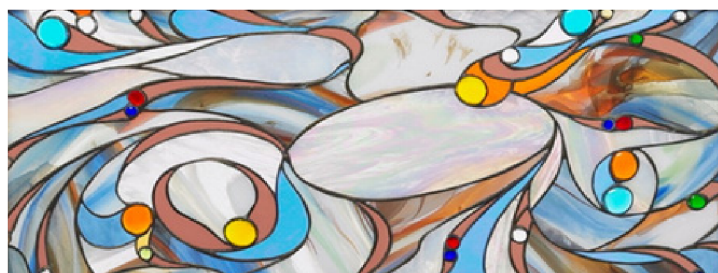


The second last panel addresses a relatively recent phenomenon in human history, "The Rise of Science and Technology". On the one hand, this rise has given us our lives of ease and privilege. Our ability to understand many of the phenomena that mystified early humans has grown in tandem with scientific research, exploration, and development.

The panel suggests that even the unleashing of the horrific atomic bomb has a hypnotic attraction. But once again, we find the juxtaposition of opposites. Even more dangerous than the destructiveness of the atomic cloud is its misinterpretation of power, distracting us from truly knowing the power of the opulent Earth. Questing to understand the power of the cosmos encapsulated in one of the smallest forms in creation, the atom, we ignore the opulent Earth's power. In his book, *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*, Brian Swimme speaks of another way to approach understanding that power:

"The crucial step here is to awaken to the fact of the Sun's gravitational power. The Earth is one immense planet and it is being whipped around the Sun by the power of the Sun. This is something the Sun is doing in every instant of every day. We are held by the Sun. If the Sun released us from our bond with it, we would sail off into deep space... To contemplate the solar system until you feel...this immense planet being swung around its massive cosmic partner is to touch an ocean of wonder as you take a first step into inhabiting the actual universe and solar system and Earth."

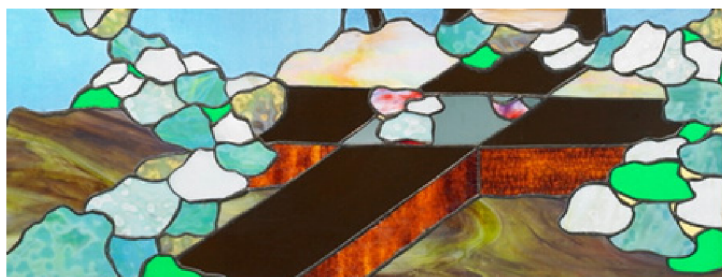
While it is humbling to know that we are but specks in the immensity of the Universe, it is also exalting to realize how connected we are to it—an expression of God's love for us and God's creation.



The eighth panel presents a beautiful, swirling representation of "The Rise of the Flowers". This might seem a strange "last panel", given the dark implications of the previous two. Yet it is a harbinger of hope, coming from the distant past. Loren Eiseley, an American anthropologist, educator, philosopher and natural science writer from the 1950's to the 1970's, gives us a context for this panel's imagery in his book, *The Immense Journey*: *"Somewhere, just a short time before the close of the Age of Reptiles, there occurred a soundless, violent explosion. It lasted millions of years, but it was an explosion, nevertheless. It marked the emergence of the angiosperms—the flowering plants... Flowers changed the face of the planet. Without them, the world we know—even (we ourselves)—would never have existed."* In the beauty of flowers, we find wonder, joy, meaning, and comfort. Without flowers, we would not have the fruits of plants, which sustain all life on land. The panel celebrates this Earthy symbol of the explosion of life exuberance, even though the panel is (intentionally) out of evolutionary sequence.



The flowers suggested here return our reflections to the first panel (discussed in this year's first newsletter issue) the Cross on the Earth.



The Cross is close to the earth and surrounded by colourful flowers, affirming that it is linked to the Story of Creation. Following the artist's suggestion that the space in the centre of the Cross hints at an open space of wondrous possibility, the explosively life-giving flowers in the central space indicate that, although it is the symbol of suffering and death, the Cross also proclaims hope and resurrection. Carved from a tree, it is also the Tree of Life.

In pondering this image, as well as the others in these "Stations of Our Cosmic Earth", we are reminded of Fr. Thomas Berry's insight that the "Passion of the Earth" is connected to the Passion of Christ. For both, we are the cause of the suffering. Christ's Passion and Resurrection, however, take us beyond suffering to a life of Grace and Hope. The Passion of the Earth describes an urgent dimension of the Passionist Charism: to always keep in mind the "*Memoria Passionis*", the Memory of the Passion. Pope Francis alerted us to "the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth" in his letter *Laudato 'Si*. We know as faithful followers of Christ that without the Cross, we would be without the hope of the Resurrection.

In our time, this "moment of Grace" that is the 21st century, we are privileged to experience not only the encouragement of The Earth's annual cycle of life, death, and "resurrection" (come spring), but also to learn to live as beneficiaries of the billions of years of the Story of Earth and our vocation to discover and implement a mutually beneficial relationship with every creature -- because, as Aboriginal peoples remind us, they are "all our relatives".

- by Marlene Bourdon-King, in collaboration with Fr. Stephen Dunn, CP

Christmas Blessing

On that first Christmas,
All of Creation took notice—
The night sky shone with unearthly light
As the Star and the Heavenly Chorus
Joyfully proclaimed your birth.
The lowly and the lofty,
The simple and the wise,
Came to pay you homage,
Your humble shelter warmed by the breath of
animals
In whose manger you were laid.
May we remember
How magnificent
Was that moment—
When the promise of ages
Became one of us!
Love Incarnate
Lord of Light
Prince of Peace
Hope for the World
Bless us again this Christmas!

- MBK



*The Garden Ministry
extends our wish to everyone in
Our Passionist Family of St. Gabriel's:*



*May you celebrate a
Blessed, Peaceful, and Happy Christmas!*