

I write these garden thoughts with no new noticing or specific event in mind. The garden has been humming with all sorts of life. Every crevice seems to hide a cricket, and their choirs make the nighttime come alive. The lilt of the children's laughter brings lightness to the air as the notes of chickens and goats punctuate their games. Our sharing table with the day's harvest welcomes trickles or streams of visitors depending on the humidity and the heat. We are rarely left with a single tomato by day's end. In the meantime, the work of watering, weeding, feeding, and gleaning goes on. Our helpers are a blessing, always, but especially on those visitor-filled days that invite us to be more present to our twolegged neighbors.

Last week, we welcomed people to an hour of contemplative prayer for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation initiated by Pope Francis. Creation was weeping that afternoon, literally, as tears of joy or grief, I'm not sure which, were shed in bushels from the sky. A handful of dedicated Sisters joined us along with a few moms and their children. I told the children that we would be listening to God and that sometimes we can hear God in the sounds around us – like the thunder or the wind or even their brother or sister – and encouraged them to listen carefully. For a few brief moments, we all sat listening. One by one, the children worked their way to the back of the barn where we drew quietly with chalk on the easels and on the floor. The moms stayed a bit longer to soak up the bursting silence..

I realize that I can choose any one of an abundance of moments on which to reflect this month. What I'm finding, though, is that even with all of the external activity, it is the garden within that I'd like to share. From a place of utter gratitude for all of my time in this congregation, I have decided that I will not be renewing my vows as a Sister of St. Joseph. Among many other changes, this means that I will be leaving the garden.

I've been cycling around my grief at this loss of a beloved ministry in stages of denial, anger (mostly at God), and tight-fisted clinging. The deepest parts of me know that it is not my work, it is God's work, and that "all manner of things shall be well" as I trust in and follow the movement of the Spirit. Every other part of me, though, was plotting ways that I could stay at the garden as much as possible. Over time, through prayer and conversation, I realized that I was spending so much energy clinging to the Garden Ministry that I was neglecting the garden within. By hanging onto an idea for my



future life, I was forgetting to be present in my life right now. I was losing today, and therefore myself, because of an outcome I hoped for tomorrow. The invitation – to let go.

This letting go is something that happens a little bit more each day (and a little less some days too). Every time my grasp lessens just a little bit, I know myself to be held in the loving embrace of God just a little more. My hopes and my dreams continue, but less my hopes, I think, and more God's hopes in me, God's dreams in me. That garden within is being tended ever so carefully when I allow my God in to tend it, and there is a beauty in not yet knowing what seeds have been planted there.

I don't know how tomorrow will look and yet I am finding myself here, among humming activity and bursting silence, deep grief and joyful anticipation, letting go and being held.

Heather Ganz