

Thoughts from the Garden

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A flower became a cucumber. A seed became a plant. Sunlight became my salad. This all happened at the garden today, and yesterday, and it will probably happen again tomorrow. Thousands of miraculous transformations are happening every moment; we are surrounded by them.

Most of these transformations happen so slowly that we don't notice them happening. They occur before our very eyes, but we can't quite see them. When I leave the garden at night to a stem of green tomatoes and return in the morning to a stem of red ones, I am charmed by the transformation that happened without my observing. My tongue, too, is delighted by the burst of sweetness of my first ripe tomato each morning. When I plant seeds in the rich soil and days later see their first stretchings toward the sun, I am enchanted. Somehow, all of a sudden and yet with infinitesimal slowness, transformation happens.



Another miraculous transformation is happening in the Honey House at this moment. Hanging on a parsley stem by a perfectly placed, silky thin strand, is a chrysalis. Mary Lou and I discovered the tiny black speck of a caterpillar weeks ago and have been minding it and its three siblings ever since. When we harvested their parsley abode, we recognized that our lives were intertwined. We were now responsible for these little lives. We watched as the tiny black specks matured into big, juicy caterpillars with clearly defined stripes of brilliant colors. Twice we noticed waves moving through the caterpillar that caused its whole body to pulse. As we observed, we saw it wrap itself in something that came from within its body. The caterpillar was no longer – its skin crumpled at the top of its new chrysalis like yesterday's laundry wrinkled and tossed to the side. Twice, also, we witnessed a brand new butterfly emerge then waited as its wings dried and it prepared to fly. We cheered as it lifted off on its first flight.

Watching these great transformations happen were akin to watching a new life being born, and it is no wonder that caterpillars and butterflies have provided inspiration for prayer, art, poetry, and music for generations. Through the lifespan of these beautiful lives, we learn a bit about the transformations that are happening both around and within us. The chrysalis looks like it is constant, steady, nearly unchanging until the last day when it becomes almost translucent. We know, however, that what entered the chrysalis is entirely different from what emerges. Those infinitesimal changes give birth to something entirely new.

As I observe these transformations around me, I am encouraged to look within. What tiny changes are happening within me? Am I willing to let go of myself – my ideas, thoughts, beliefs, desires - to enter into the chrysalis of transformation? Am I willing to risk I've known myself to be to become more am? I wonder, too, how we might do community, allowing the slow work of transform our lives together. After all, miraculous transformations are every moment; we are surrounded by they are within us.



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Oh look... a butterfly!