

Nourishment: The Practice of Sustenance

He realized he needed strength, sustenance that couldn't come from bread alone. - J.E.B. Spredemann

It's November, which brings to mind all the wonderful smells and tastes of the season. Spiced apple cider, warm squash soup, cranberry sauce and turkey all bring to mind some of the rituals of the autumn. Gathering with friends and family, we eat and drink and eat and eat.

This annual ritual is more than just putting a fancy meal on the table; it is about how we nourish a part of ourselves that needs more than food. Good conversation, being with family, with love—these are all ways we gain nourishment, ways that we sustain ourselves when faced with lean times. There are other ways we sustain ourselves as well. Some of us take this time to nourish others: volunteering their time at soup kitchens, at shelters, schools, and with people in all states of need.

From the people who volunteer their time, we can see that nourishment comes not only from consumption, but also from sustaining others. By being of service, we feed our souls.

Questions for Discussion and Discernment on your own, or with each other:

1. How do you nourish a community (e.g. church)?
2. How do you nourish your mind? Your body? Your spirit?
3. What is enough? How do you know when you've had enough?
4. How has what nourishes you changed? Are you/were you surprised by the change?
5. How do you nourish the Earth? How does the Earth nourish you?
6. How do you know you're hungry? When you're hungry, what do you need?
7. Is there such thing as false nourishment? What is false nourishment?

Quotes and short readings:

Morning Ritual by Julien

The toast arrived, buttered and quartered, yet my son looked at it as though it were not the same meal he had eaten every day for the last 6 months. The reason? I hadn't cut it right.

While my son wept over his ruined morning I prepared my own breakfast. As I sat down to eat, I realized that it was not just the food that nourished me but the ritual as well. By not cutting his toast just right, my son was fed but not nourished.

"When you assess your own life, consider it with the eye of a gardener. Underneath the surface lies rich, fertile soil waiting to nurture the seeds you sow. Even more than you can imagine will grow there if given a chance."
— Steve Goodier

"O holy Sunday, let your darkness not come along my way. Let her nurture internal and external world, as I start my personal day."
— Santosh Kalwar

"Each moment is a poetic expression of the undefined. As long as it remains undefined, it has all the beauty of the world and it steps inside to nurture your dreams."
— Grigoris Deoudis

"A brilliant idea is like a baby in a mother's womb. You need to bring it out in the world, nurture it, feed it, grow it, till it becomes big enough to take care of itself.
If you leave it at the stage of an idea itself, it is as good as non-existent."
— Manoj Arora

"The Paradox of Sustenance: For an organism's life to be continued; another organism's life has to be discontinued."
— Mokokoma Mokhonoana

"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home."
— Edith Sitwell

"I can't do anything," says Peeta, "unless you count baking bread."
— Suzanne Collins

