

Ordinary Time; Observing the Sacred Mundane

Noon Service Family Engagement September 2021

During this season after Pentecost we are thinking of the elements of fire, water, earth and air as contemplative thresholds for divine connection. We are currently in what is referred to as Ordinary Time in the Liturgical Year. These months between Pentecost and Advent are an invitation to recognize the Creator's hands in our everyday experiences, and to tune our awareness to the sacredness of ordinary life. These weekly activities are meant to support a habitual savoring of the moments of our lives, viewing them as the places where God speaks, and finding a sense of wonder and gratitude for the earth that sustains us. These may be done with children or alone.



Autumn Walking Meditation, Herbal Vinegar and Nature Altar

Walking Meditation; Thoughts By Tich Nhat Hanh

"Many of us walk for the sole purpose of getting from one place to another. Now suppose we are walking to a sacred place. We would walk quietly and take each gentle step with reverence. I propose that we walk this way every time we walk on the earth. The earth is sacred and we touch her with each step. We should be very respectful, because we are walking on our mother. If we walk like that, then every step will be grounding, every step will be nourishing.

We can train ourselves to walk with reverence. Wherever we walk, whether it's the railway station or the supermarket, we are walking on the earth and so we are in a holy sanctuary. If we remember to walk like that, we can be nourished and find solidity with each step...To be grounded in the earth is to feel its solidity with each step and know that we are right where we are supposed to be.

We think that the earth is the earth and we are something outside of the earth. But in fact we are inside of the earth. Imagine that the earth is the tree and we are a leaf. The earth is not the environment, something outside of us that we need to care for. The earth is us. Just as your parents, ancestors, and teachers are inside you, the earth is in you. Taking care of the earth, we take care of ourselves.

When we see that the earth is not just the environment, that the earth is in us, at that moment you can have real communion with the earth. But if we see the earth as only the environment, with ourselves in the center, then we only want to do something for the earth in order for us to survive. But that is not enough. That is a dualistic way of seeing.

We have to practice looking at our planet not just as matter, but as a living and sentient being. The universe, the sun, and the stars have contributed many elements to the earth, and when we look into the earth we see that it's a very beautiful flower containing the presence of the whole universe. When we look into our own bodily formation, we are made of the same elements as the planet. It has made us. The earth and the universe are inside of us.

When we take mindful steps on the earth, our body and mind unite, and we unite with the earth. The earth gave birth to us and the earth will receive us again. Nothing is lost. Nothing is born. Nothing dies. We don't need to wait until after our body has disintegrated to go back to Mother Earth. We are going back to Mother Earth at every moment. Whenever we breathe, whenever we step, we are returning to the earth.

You may like to try this exercise while you walk: Breathing in, "I know Mother Earth is in me." Breathing out, "I know I am in Mother Earth."

I think of the earth as a bodhisattva, a great and compassionate being. A bodhisattva is a being who has awakening, understanding, and

love. Any living being who has awakening, peace, understanding, and love can be called a bodhisattva, but a bodhisattva doesn't have to be a human being. When we look into a tree, we see the tree is fresh, it nourishes life, and it offers shade and beauty. It's a place of refuge for so many birds and other creatures. A bodhisattva is not something that is up in the clouds far away from us. Bodhisattvas are all around us. A young person who has love, who has freshness, who has understanding, who offers us a lot of happiness, is a bodhisattva. The pine standing in the garden gives us joy, offers us oxygen, and makes life more beautiful.

When we say that earth is a beautiful bodhisattva, this is not our imagination. It is a fact that the earth is giving life and she is very beautiful. The bodhisattva is not a separate spirit inhabiting the earth; we should transcend that idea. There are not two separate things—the earth, which is a material thing, and the spirit of the earth, a nonmaterial thing that inhabits the earth.

When we recognize the virtues, the talent, the beauty of the earth bodhisattva, love is born. You love the earth and the earth loves you. You would do anything for the well-being of the earth. And the earth will do anything for your well-being. That is the natural outcome of the real loving relationship. The earth is not just your environment, to be taken care of or worshiped; you are each other. Every mindful step can manifest that love.

When we walk mindfully on the face of the earth, we are grounded in her generosity and we cannot help but be grateful. All of the earth's qualities of patience, stability, creativity, love, and nondiscrimination are available to us when we walk reverently, aware of our connection."

Autumn Nature Altar

Autumn is a wonderful time to begin a nature altar tradition! When we walk through the woods with children we watch our pockets fill with precious stones, feathers and seeds. Keeping a nature altar at home is a way to celebrate these beautiful treasures together (as well as limit their accumulation). A nature altar practice can change with the season as a way of honoring the natural rhythms of the year and to remember our place in the earth's cycles. Start by choosing a prominent space in your home where it will remain. This could be at the kitchen table, a mantle or a section of bookshelf. Choose a bit of cloth that represents the season, orange or red are nice for autumn. Add a candle and a few seasonal treasures, a small pumpkin or some dried corn. Add nature treasures throughout the season to the altar. As autumn comes to a close, a winter altar may be constructed in its place, using a white or blue cloth etc!



Goldenrod - *Solidago canadensis*

Goldenrod Herbal Vinegar

Goldenrod (solidago) is antioxidant rich, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antimicrobial, a support for urinary tract health, and yields a beautiful steadfast yellow dye. Solidago makes a really delicious herbal vinegar, which can be sprinkled on salads and sated vegetables.

Herbal vinegar may also be taken as a cold-fighting oxymel by adding local raw honey at a 1:1 ratio. (Oxymels can be taken as a shot or diluted as a drinking vinegar)

To make this herbal vinegar gather the aerial parts of the plant (from a location other than a busy roadside. You'll often see her there but the dust and contaminants present wont make for good medicine.) Always leave more than you take.

Ingredients

- 2 cups chopped goldenrod leaves and flowers
- 4 cups organic apple cider vinegar

- 1 1-quart mason jar (steriliz

Instructions

- Place all goldenrod parts in the mason jar. (Be sure all parts are free of moisture). Pour vinegar into the jar and be sure to mix well to ensure no air bubbles are trapped.
- Place lid on, but be sure to have a piece of wax or parchment paper to protect the vinegar from the lid. Not only can the vinegar erode metal lids but older lids contain BPA.
- Label your vinegar with the date and contents.
- Let the mixture sit in a cool dark location for anywhere from six to eight weeks. Shake mixture every second day or so. After 6 to 8 weeks, strain the contents and squeeze extra vinegar out of the plant matter and return vinegar to the jar.

Continued Reflection

Holy Spirit,
Making life alive,
Moving in all things,
You are the source of all creation and beings..
You awaken and reawaken everything that is.

-Hildegard Von Bingen

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