

THAW!  
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## HOST: THE HIGHLAND SHEPHERD

A unique, Christian site, featuring many resources for individuals and for parish study and action. Not without humour! A creation of Canon Jim Irvine, of the Diocese of Fredericton. Cruise the site; it's useful, edifying, fun, original, surprising!

## IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue we are specializing in green; especially in the meditation swiped from Archbishop Harold Nutter, (retired) about how not to keep your lawn; a dialogue between Francis and God. Rolf Pedersen has written an article and I am most grateful to him. And we have an announcement from Marilyn Mincey of the Dogwood Fellowship. Marilyn is a nominee for Chapter this year. Don't forget to cast your ballot the right way. No 'suasion here!

The Ven. Weir Shivering was last seen throwing grass seed on an iceberg in the vicinity of Ellesmere Island. He should realize that "green with envy" is not an environmental plus. He is quite balmy after his trip to Hawaii. There is a prayer in the form of a sonnet for the upcoming meeting of the General Synod on the front page of The Highland Shepherd. I have not thought it necessary to reprint it here. . Don't forget

to look over the resumes and reviews thereof, of the candidates for Primate ( in the May issue of Thaw!) and let them prompt your prayers.

Mandatory reading and study for everyone. Lets start the revolution and let God arrange nature as God planned.

From Archbishop Harold L. Nutter...

## **GOD'S THOUGHTS ON LAWNS**

GOD:

Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there on the planet? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honeybees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But, all I see are these green rectangles.

St. FRANCIS:

It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers "weeds" and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD:

Grass? But, it's so boring. It's not colorful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees; only grubs and sod worms. It's sensitive to temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS:

Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD:

The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS:

Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it—sometimes twice a week.

GOD:

They cut it? Do they then bail it like hay?

ST. FRANCIS:

Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD:

They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS:

No, Sir, just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD:

Now, let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And, when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS:

Yes, Sir.

GOD:

These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS:

You aren't going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD:

What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn, they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. It's a natural cycle of life.

ST. FRANCIS:

You better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD:

No. What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS:

After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD:

And where do they get this mulch?

ST FRANCIS:

They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

GOD:

Enough! I don't want to think about this anymore. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

ST. CATHERINE:

"Dumb and Dumber", Lord. It's a story about...

GOD:

Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St Francis.

## **MAKING NOWHERES**

Rolf Pedersen, TSSF

There was once a large, piece of undeveloped territory called simply "The Grove" at the end of Fern Avenue, the short Ottawa street on which I grew up. As a boy, it had special meaning for me, my brother Paul and a few playmates who may still be alive to remember it. I can vividly recall my favourite climbing trees (one a magnificently welcoming wild cherry) at the entrance to the grove and especially the fateful day

when these trees were suddenly and (it seemed to me) ruthlessly rooted up and destroyed to make way for a Fern Avenue extension and the Connelys' new house.

It was a personal loss and tragedy. At the time it simply seemed vaguely wrong. I stifled my rage on the grounds that new housing development was the way of the world. I was somehow taught by the actions of the powerful bulldozers that razed the place that the rights of land owners and developers came first. The rights of trees and other non-human creatures to exist and contribute to the peace and harmony and well-being of the world (and me) were nonexistent. The notion itself that trees were living creatures was rendered nonsensical, almost heretical. Such life forms were readily expendable. Trees were, in effect, weeds then. And judging from the abandon with which they are still being summarily ripped from the landscape to make way for subdivisions in the fast-'growing' city where I now live, trees remain weeds.

Well, maybe the trees of my youth were not as forgettable as I resigned myself to think 50 years ago. In my senior years I'm now vividly recalling those trees, the meadows, the trails, the rocky prominences and the hills where I tobogganed in winter, often played, explored in solitude in summer and traversed virtually every elementary school day for five years. I can no longer pretend that they are not a part of my being. "Face Rock" had deep significance for me, though I cannot say why, only that it had a phenomenally haunting existence. Had this and other unique features been rescued from the developers' earth-moving machines, I'm sure I would have visited Ottawa far more often than I actually have over the last half-century. For the place had an *animi loci*, or place-soul. Though the grove no longer has a space-time existence, that *animi loci* is an inextricable part of me. I can smell it, feel it, experience its wildness and the animals and birds that lived and roamed there. I can be influenced and perhaps even guided by it still. In a sense, I walked with God there.

But The Grove (like some of the disappeared environments that I'm sure you too can recall) can no longer be physically touched by me and it cannot be physically touched by anybody else either. It is gone. In the sense that succeeding generations of Ottawa youth cannot ever know The Grove, they are losers and I feel sorry for their loss. For me, Ottawa today is another overblown urban blight area. Aside from the usual tourist traps, shopping malls and some rather attractively laid out federal government properties, there isn't much, apart from my brother and sister-in-law, that I can truly value.

I don't know what this observation does for you. For me, the fear that we are on the way to reducing whole landscapes to a random series of uninhabitable nowheres, is becoming overwhelming. I doubt that we are creating Edens when we raze wildernesses to make way for subdivisions. We are not improving on nature. Nor are we even helping people to live better, and I'm no longer as willing as I once was to

buy into the notion that trees and other non-human species have no right to exist; that wilderness is a liability. Above all I'm not ready to concede that the notion of 'sacred space' is purely a figment of an overactive imagination. I think I'm far more ready than I once was to confront a few bulldozers.

The planet needs wilderness areas more than ever, principally (in this age) as absorbers of the greenhouse gases that scientists see as having disastrous climate change effects. So do humans need wilderness. For the natural landscape symbolizes the untamed, wild part of the human soul. It is a stark reminder that death and decay do not follow life and growth but occur concurrently with them. In the forest it quickly becomes apparent that new life is dependent on death and decay just as death and decay are dependent on life. In the natural forest, life and death dance together on intimate terms so closely that they are at times almost indistinguishable.

Humans periodically need to return to the wild, to experience first hand the eternal, elemental powers that reside in natural areas.

Wildness, however, should not be confused with a state of being out of control. Rather, it signifies innate naturalness existing in balance with natural principles. The wild woods give us the possibility of deep psychic healing. That alone surely makes them worth conserving.

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