

Along the track

Time for Tomatoes

It's that time again, time to put in this year's crop of tomatoes. For some reason I didn't have much luck with them last year but here's to a better harvest this year.

What would we do without the humble tomato? It comes in so many shapes and sizes, so many varieties, so many taste sensations, so many ways to use it. I read that the common cultivated tomato is the world's highest-value and most widely grown vegetable crop. When I was in boarding school many years ago, a generous farmer donated a truck load of tomatoes. Day after day for the next weeks we had them for breakfast, for lunch (two courses), for dinner in every way imaginable. One wit joked that we would get them for sweets next. We did!

The tomato arrived in Spain and Europe after a long journey in the ships of the early explorers, all the way from the Aztecs and other parts of South America. This humble vegetable was initially treated with suspicion, considered poisonous, then just a decoration, and now it is enjoyed in so many dishes cross the world, another gift of God's unfolding creation. I wonder who it was who was game enough to taste the first one!

The humble tomato is an interesting example of creation and the ingenuity of those who have made it such a versatile companion in our diet. It began life, scientists tell us about seven thousand years ago as not much more than a berry and look at how many shapes, sizes, colours and tastes it offers now. Domesticating this little berry took persistence and ingenuity, weeding, feeding, cross pollinating, not giving in to failure until this fruit is grown in just about every country in the world. It is a reminder that we have a part in the ongoing act of creation even now. And thank God for that!

The tomato is not just a great vegetable, it also calls us to be part of the unfolding creative enterprise as well. Around the same time each year we till the soil and enrich it, plant the seeds and begin the wait. Everyone seems to have expert advice on how to grow tomatoes! There is a time for everything, Scripture reminds us. *I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.* Ecclesiastes 3

So we give thanks for this staple of our diet, for its variety and the joy it brings. We give thanks to those who planted the tomatoes and tended to them in the summer months. And when it is time to make use of their plenty; the ripe ones and green ones, the small and the large, we gather to bottle them, dry them, make salsas, pickles and sauces. Many people who gather together at this time to process this vegetable can attest to the wonderful sense of community that process brings. We give thanks for the joy of the humble tomato.

We give thanks for its steady evolution, for its versatility and flavour, the fruits of God's unfolding creation and our part in it. Thank God for their abundance and their variety and how they bring us together. We can take so much for granted, ignoring the wonder and beauty of creation around us. We see it in the beautiful vistas and the stunning sunrises or sunsets and let the other wonders pass us by, and we miss the humble, the ordinary which are also signs of God's grandeur and love. As Jesus said, 'unless we become like little children...' So perhaps that means looking at the world through their eyes, allowing ourselves to be amazed and thankful for the little things of life.

God of the Harvest,
You entrusted us with the care of your ongoing creation,
We give thanks for its wonder and its variety.
Every creature, every plant, every rock and grain of sand proclaims Your glory.
We give thanks for the joy of the harvest, for the taste of all that we have grown,
For how it brings us together
God of the harvest,
Deepen our awareness of our connectedness with all Your creation, help us to care for it and use it wisely

How do I show my appreciation for the wonders of creation?

Regards
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