

Eco-Exercise for the Soul - Practice Holy Communion

I remember sitting day after day at the same table in a dull restaurant where I had to eat my lunch. There was a beautiful red rose in a small vase in the middle of the table, I looked at the rose with sympathy and enjoyed its beauty. Every day I talked with my rose. But then I became suspicious. Because while my mood was changing during the week from happy to sad, from disappointed to angry, from energetic to apathetic, my rose was always the same. And moved by my suspicion I lifted my fingers to the rose and touched it. It was a plastic thing. I was deeply offended and never went back there to eat.

We cannot talk with plastic nature because it cannot tell us the real story about life and death. But if we are sensitive to the voice of nature, we might be able to hear sounds from a world where man and nature both find their shape. We will never fully understand the meaning of the sacramental signs of bread and wine when they do not make us realize that the whole of nature is a sacrament pointing to a reality far beyond itself.

Henri J. M. Nouwen. "Nature as a Sacramental Pointer" in Creative Ministry

Everything exists so that something else can exist. Every time that you eat, whatever it is you ate gave its life so that you may have life. When we start understanding that this giving and receiving is symbolic of giving and receiving divine love (wine) and truth (bread) we can begin to understand the enormous responsibility of becoming a worthy sacrifice ourselves - may we be the bread of Truth and the wine of Love that feeds and gives life to others. And may we be eternally grateful to those that have been bread and wine for us and given us life.

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Five Gathas for Mindful Eating - Thich Naht Hahn.

Serving Food - In this food I see clearly the presence of the entire universe supporting my existence.

Looking at the Filled Plate - All living beings are struggling for life. May they all have enough food to eat today.

Just Before Eating - The plate is filled with food. I am aware that each morsel is the fruit of much hard work by those who produced it.

Beginning to Eat - With the first taste, I promise to practice loving kindness. With the second, I promise to relieve the suffering of others. With the third, I promise to see others' joy as my own. With the fourth, I promise to learn the way of non-attachment and equanimity.

Finishing the Meal - The plate is empty. My hunger is satisfied. I vow to live for the benefit of all beings.

The Salmon figures prominently in the boyhood Deeds of Fionn, which recounts the early adventures of Fionn mac Cumhaill. According to the story, an ordinary salmon ate nine hazelnuts that fell into the Wisdom (aka *Tobar Segais*) from nine hazel trees that surrounded the well. By this act, the salmon gained all the world's knowledge. Moreover, the first person to eat of its flesh would, in turn, gain this knowledge.

Well of

