

Yesterday, the Annual Quinte Garden Tour sponsored by the University Women's Club was held. Gardens on both sides of the Bay of Quinte were featured as people marveled at what wonderful beauty people could create, places of rare beauty and radiant colour. Some gardens were the work of large budgets and creative companies. Others were the result of the sweat and tears of individuals whose vision became a reality.

I am always overwhelmed by the artistry of gardeners, paid or volunteer. Care is taken with the location, garden bed shape and topography to maximize a sense of beauty. Then plants are chosen which compliment one another as to height, width, colour, leaf and flower shapes as well as blooming time. In short, very little happens in a great garden by accident – someone's creative mind and hard work has made it a reality.

If you are a person in tune with spiritual matters, you can not but marvel at the artistry of God in the creation of such a variety of plants from which the gardener chooses. Over time, plants have evolved from simple flowers and primary colours to today's infinite variety and mixtures. I for one can not walk through a beautiful garden cultivated or natural, without being overwhelmed by a sense of wonder with our Creator God.

When I first moved to Belleville and settled into my new to me old historic house, I reviewed the gardens which were overgrown and unkempt. As the cleaning up of the flower beds took place, I wondered at times which were the flowers and which the weeds. A wise neighbour said this: if you like it, it is a flower; if you don't like it, it is a weed. Good advice I thought as I reflected with others on the job ahead to re-establish order and beauty to an exhausted yard.

The development of a beautiful yard takes years of commitment and work. Very little appears the first year as the hard work of creating the beds, planting the trees, etc. occurs. The gardener has to be patient, with a willingness to contain their excitement and natural impatience.

I continue to marvel each springtime as one visits the plant nurseries. They are called garden centres but I see them as hope centres. As you make your decision, buy and bring home and plant, you can not but be impressed that these little seedlings will one day be plants full of verdant leaves and blossoms of radiant colour.

Today you and I are here to worship the God who is such an amazing Creator and the gardener extraordinaire. We gather each week to offer our praises of thanksgiving, our prayers for others and ourselves and to be renewed for the weeks ahead. This morning our worship is enhanced by the enactment of the Sacrament of Baptism. Two sets of parents bring their daughter to be baptized and to proclaim their faith and commitment to God.

When we look at children, we are filled with a sense of wonder and renewal. The coming together of a man and a woman brings forth life completely unique, a life carrying the genes of families past while coming together in a one time only creation. Brooklyn and Addison are such one time wonders and we celebrate this uniqueness before God this morning.

God allows us to be co-creators with him. Human beings are never cookie cutter copies of anyone – they are all “one of a kind.” The essence of parents and past generations resonate within the new life. However, the new life is a ‘one only.’”

All of us who are parents remember that sense of amazement when first we saw the child entrusted to us. The birth process in itself stuns us as we realize we have taken part in one of the great miracles of all time. To us has been entrusted this life, an enormous responsibility indeed.

Like the future for life of the tiny seedling we bring back from the garden centre, we too hold the future of our child in our hands.

The child will be influenced in every aspect of life, good and bad, by the way we behave, speak and demonstrate through our example. We instinctively know that this new life needs more than food and liquid. We want to ensure that this life has open to it every possibility for good we can offer.

Back to the analogy of the gardener: We too will want to ensure the weeds do not choke our child and that there is room to grow.

We too will water to ensure the environment for life is as full as possible.

Part of our responsibility as parents, relatives and friends of these young people is to share those things which we view as important for a life of wholeness, strength and opportunity. Do we not want to share what we believe about life and what makes us content and happy with these children?

This act of Baptism this morning is a public statement by parents, godparents and the congregation that we believe Brooklyn and Addison have a right to know about the love of God and to learn about how they can walk with God throughout all the vicissitudes of life.

So what did we do in this Sacrament of Baptism? First, the parents assured us that they presented their child willingly and freely for baptism. They did so because they wanted to do so, free from family pressures. They proclaimed their faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and their desire that their daughter know him for herself. They promised to bring up their child in the faith. This means they will freely share their faith journey openly with their child and see to it that their child is exposed to learning about God and his love for all. The Godparents promise to be there for the child and their parents. They plan to assist the parents in this task of raising the child to know of God.

If you heard their words, they promised to be honourable examples themselves to the child. This is a very solemn promise never to be taken lightly by any of us.

You the congregation, all of you who came to this service, acknowledged your willingness to be there for these parents and their child and all children in God's care. "To be there" is the critical point. This we can offer to the parents – they are not alone – we are there with them in prayer and in practical ways.

Baptism brings into God's community these two girls and we wholeheartedly welcome them. We will be active participants in their unique journey and we ought never to abandon them.

Thanks be to God for this wonderful opportunity today.

Alleluia!

Rev. Gary Magarrell