

Celebrating Fall: The Colors, the Harvest, Giving Thanks and the Circle of Life

From the Pastor's Desk

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INTRODUCTION

I have always celebrated the changing seasons as they come and go each year. Every season reminds us of the beauty of God's creation and echoes the words of Ecclesiastes that there is "a time for every matter under heaven." The rhythm of the seasons teaches us that life is constantly moving forward according to God's plan.

Growing up, my favorite season was fall. I loved the rich, bold colors that transformed the landscape each year. The brilliant reds, radiant golds, vibrant oranges, warm yellows, and deep browns painted the world with such beauty. As I have grown older, however, I have also come to appreciate the beauty of spring. Spring reminds us of new birth and new beginnings, and as Catholics, it points us to the promise that in Christ there is always new life. Even so, fall continues to hold a special place in my heart.

COLORS

The colors of autumn are much more than simply beautiful. They offer us a stunning change from the fading greens of late summer and remind us of several important truths. They symbolize change and transformation as nature moves from a season of growth into one of rest. They represent harvest and abundance, a time when the fruits of months of labor are gathered. They also speak of maturity and wisdom, marking the completion of another cycle of life. Finally, they invite us to pause for reflection, looking back with gratitude while preparing for whatever season comes next.

Whenever we see the colors of fall, God gently reminds us that nothing in this world lasts forever. Every season eventually comes to an end, but with every ending comes the promise of another beginning. God is always writing the next chapter of our lives.

HARVEST

Autumn is also the season of harvest. Throughout the world, harvest celebrations give thanks for the gifts of the earth, the labor of those who cultivate it, and God's constant providence. From early September through the end of November, communities celebrate in many ways, yet many traditions are shared.

Harvest festivals bring people together for music, games, food, crafts, and fellowship. Homes and churches are decorated with pumpkins, gourds, corn stalks, wheat, apples, grapes, and colorful autumn leaves. I especially remember how much my mother loved decorating for fall and Halloween. For her, these decorations marked the beginning of the journey toward the Christmas season.

Many families visit farms and orchards to pick apples, pumpkins, and other seasonal crops. Communities sponsor parades, county fairs, and state fairs that celebrate agriculture, livestock, and the hard work of local farmers.

Halloween has also become part of the autumn tradition. While it often emphasizes costumes, spooky decorations, and images of death, much of its original religious meaning as *All Hallows' Eve* has faded over time. There is certainly nothing wrong with enjoying Halloween, dressing up, and celebrating with family and friends. In many

ways, it reminds us that the harvest has been completed and that creation is entering a season of dormancy and rest before life returns in the spring.

GIVING THANKS

For us as Catholics, however, the harvest carries an even deeper spiritual meaning. It reminds us that God is the source of every good gift we receive. Human labor and God's blessings work together to provide for our needs. It calls us to share our abundance with those who are less fortunate and to recognize that the blessings we receive are never meant to be kept only for ourselves.

The harvest also challenges us to cultivate not only the fruits of the earth but the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These spiritual fruits are the true harvest that God desires to see growing within each of us.

Last year I wrote an article about Thanksgiving and the importance of gratitude. Many Catholic parishes celebrate a special Mass on Thanksgiving Day to offer thanks to God for His countless blessings. These celebrations remind us to live lives marked by gratitude, generosity, and faithful stewardship of God's creation. Every season of abundance is an opportunity to thank God and to care for our brothers and sisters in need.

CIRCLE OF LIFE

One of my favorite examples of this truth comes from Disney's *The Lion King*. When the movie was released in the summer of 1994, audiences were introduced to the beautiful song "Circle of Life," heard both at the opening and closing of the film. Throughout the story, Mufasa teaches Simba about the circle of life—that all living things have their time, including even the mighty lions.

Fall reminds us of that same reality. As we rake leaves into piles and watch children laugh and play among them, we are reminded that we, too, are part of God's created order. Like the leaves that fall from the trees, every living creature eventually experiences death. Trees, animals, plants, and even humanity all share in this earthly cycle.

Yet for us, death is never the final word. The falling leaves remind us not only of life's passing but also of God's promise that new life always follows. The beauty of autumn points beyond itself to the hope of resurrection.

CONCLUSION

As you enjoy the beauty of this fall season, take time to appreciate the splendor of God's creation. Let the changing colors remind you that God remains in control of all things. Even in death, God reveals His beauty and His faithfulness. Every ending carries within it the promise of a new beginning, and every season points us toward the eternal life that Christ has won for us.

Happy Autumn, Everyone!

Father John