Although I love all four seasons, I have a special fondness for autumn. Where I live, it comes with cooler temperatures, shorter days, and brilliant colors. You can't miss fall or ignore it. Today I've selected three autumn photos for you: a woods, an apple tree, and a burning bush. For each picture I've written a short reflection. I invite you to take a few moments now to enjoy this beautiful but fleeting season.

**The Golden Woods**

*The woods at our provincial center. (Photo by Ann Marie Teder, SND)*
God says to me: “Come in! Do come in! I've painted these woods gold and brown and yellow just for you...Come in and swish your feet among the crisp fallen leaves. I've created that sound just for you too...Look up...look down...look all around. Listen...smell...touch...taste. It's all for you. All!...Walk around if you wish...or stand in one place...or sit on a log...or even kneel on the carpet of leaves...I know you are busy doing all kinds of good things, but I hope you can afford a few minutes just to enjoy this special season....Do come in, my Beloved, and just be...with me.”

To Eve

To Eve: Scripture doesn't say what kind of fruit it was that tempted you, but tradition says it was an apple. We are quick to judge you harshly for that. "An apple?" we ask. "You gave up glorious paradise for a lowly apple?" We say that because apples are common and plentiful for many of us. Consequently we take them for granted. But the apple you saw hanging on that tree that day was the most beautiful apple you had ever laid your eyes upon. And when you picked it off the tree and held it in your hand, it took your breath away. It was so round, so red, so smooth, so shiny! It all but seduced you into biting into it. And when you did, you found the inside so white, so firm, so sweetly tart! And its juice ran down your chin. Never had you tasted anything quite like it before! Little wonder you quickly looked around for Adam, for someone to share it with.

Eve, I have experienced apples as beautiful and as delicious as that one that must have tempted you. And although I don't condone your eating the fruit of that tree, I do understand how and why you did it. I really do. Honest.
The "burning bush" is a kind of deciduous shrub. Although it is green most of the year, in autumn its leaves turn a brilliant red before they fall. I had a friend who turned her small back yard into a verdant garden. I asked her once if she had ever considered planting a burning bush in her garden. She said she had, but she decided against it. “Fifty weeks of ordinariness for a brilliant two-week splurge of color?” she said. “I didn’t think it was worth it.”

She had a point. At the same time I wondered: What is the acceptable ratio of the ordinary to the extraordinary in our lives? I don’t know the answer to that question, but I do know this: Sometimes we are too quick to label things “ordinary” and, therefore, not worth our time and attention. In doing so we miss out on their true extraordinariness. Take the burning bush. Why should we limit our appreciation of this shrub to the brief time it is bright red? Why can’t we appreciate it all year long—when its branches are filled with tiny buds or with lush green leaves—or even when its lack of leaves reveals the delicate but sturdy structure of its bare branches?

God of the ordinary and extraordinary, give me a discerning eye to see the extraordinary in the ordinary things of daily life!

What are some of your thoughts and feelings about autumn or about any of these three reflections?
Kathleen Magiera  October 7, 2013 at 4:57 am

Sr. Melannie,

Thanks for sharing your reflections on autumn. Autumn is my favorite season of the year. I enjoy all the changes that happen during the season especially the colors of the leaves on the trees turning to red, orange, and yellow. What a celebration of living and dying!

In my neck of the woods, autumn also prepares us for the coming winter. A long stretch of hibernation.

Kathleen

REPLY

Suzanne Sayer  October 7, 2013 at 10:23 am

I too love the autumn season. Thanks for these reflections.

REPLY

Karen  October 7, 2013 at 10:42 am

I have discovered that the Burning Bush is also the most resilient of garden shrubs. We have some that we have moved two or three times, or all but chopped
down due to overgrowth, but still they come back year after year. How often I feel disrupted by change or cut down by life's challenges. But I look at my Burning Bush shrubs in the yard and think "If they can do it, I can too".

Violet October 7, 2013 at 10:55 am
Melanie. Seeing God in the ordinary!! Oh, I wish I could remember that every minute of every day. What a rich experience life would be!!! I am really going to focus on that today. Thankyou for your photos and inspirations. Violet

Joan October 7, 2013 at 10:56 am
Sister Melanie,
Our burning bush is near our bird feeders and a rock garden with small pond that my husband built. The burning bush, which is quite old and large, is a haven for all the birds that visit, occasionally even hawks. When I bring my cat outside she loves to sit underneath it, or climb its branches. I don't view the burning bush as ordinary at all, and its brilliant fall colors are a beautiful bonus.
Have a wonderful day!
– Joan

Mary Schneider October 7, 2013 at 11:00 am
Autumn is the most beautiful of the seasons. I liked all 3 reflections, but the one about the burning bush made me smile. In my former high-desert country I planted my first one of these. The garden employee told me to make sure it got water in the winter, too. You guessed it...I killed the poor thing. The next one was
more successful, I let the melting snow do the watering for me. That bush was the most beautiful thing in my scraggly surroundings. Thank you again for reminding me to rejoice and celebrate all seasons, and always the glorious beauty God provides for us. Mary

Annie  October 7, 2013 at 2:19 pm

Thanks for your wonderful reflection with my picture of the golden woods! I did recognize God's invitation to come walk along the path and enjoy the beautiful golden woods that day! It is one of the reasons I can't pray the line in the Magnificat about God sending the rich away empty. We are rich in being able to see such golden beauty! ( I call it God's gold!) And I certainly was not sent away empty, nor has God ever sent me away empty! I hope you have a number of gorgeous autumn days to enjoy in this beautiful season!

Gratefully,
Sr. Ann Marie Teder, SND

Sister Miriam  October 7, 2013 at 5:19 pm

I too love the autumn and there is a group of trees that I like to watch as they change colors. Some days I seem to be in a hurry but yesterday, I believe it was the Holy Spirit, I stopped, back tracked, stood there, and admired the trees. We all need to stop and take time to enjoy God's beauty in nature. Thank you for your pictures and reflections.

REPLY

pjnoga  October 7, 2013 at 8:34 pm
Dear Melanie,

Thanks for the beautiful reflections on fall and the Beautiful pictures. I too, love the season of fall. With all its gorgeous colors it takes my breath away when I stop to admire the beauty of the lord. Reminds me of the book “The Fall of Freddy the Leaf”. It is at this time I read it to my class. We talk about it and make some form of poetry With it the children just love the story. Thanks so much.

Tom
October 8, 2013 at 9:55 am

Melannie,

How wonderful to see a red bush I passed so many times, and in the background the stately spruce at 315 North Street. Your reflection on this bush was a gem.

Tom G

Michelle K.
October 8, 2013 at 12:21 pm

Fabulous Fall! Awesome Autumn! I was born in the fall and married in the fall. I love this time of year. The smell of decaying leaves...the crisp crunch as we step on them...the way leaves swirl in the wind...the blazing colours...raking the leaves up, jumping in the pile and throwing them in the air and at each other. As a child, the neighbourhood kids would gather in a heavily treed park area beside our school with rakes and rake together monster-size leaf piles next to the picnic tables and then jump off the tables into the piles. And of course it would always end in a leaf tossing fight. Then we would go home smelling of fall!

Michelle K.