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From the Clergy Associate

Like a garden

As our days begin to really feel like spring is finally here, I am eager to get out into my yard and start clearing away the old leaves and sticks that have collected along some of my small garden beds. Mud seems to be the “main crop” at this time of year, but the possibilities and the awakening perennials are there, even if unseen for now...

In his book *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life*, James Martin, SJ, uses the image of a garden as a metaphor for faith. Yes, faith is a gift from God, but, he explains, faith is not something that you “just have”. While you may already have the basics—soil, seeds, water—you still have to cultivate and nourish it. Like a garden, faith takes some patience, persistence, and even work (p. 31).

So, what about the seasons when we feel as if our faith garden is buried under 2 feet of snow and frozen solid, or looks as if it’s simply a bed of mud? Well, I guess that is where our patience, persistence, and work comes in... And I believe being part of a community—a faith community—helps tremendously with this patience, persistence, and work. Surrounding ourselves with people who can support us and challenge us—all from a place of love—can help us through those seasons of heavy snow and overwhelming mud. What other tools do we have available to us here for our faith gardens? Sharing our small experiences of grace in our lives and giving thanks, whether that be in conversations at coffee hour, Book Group, or even an Outreach Committee meeting can help in the thawing and cultivation. And coming together to worship helps—even if it feels as if you are simply going through the motions. Spending time in conversation with God, in prayer, is also central to cultivation—even if you might wonder if your prayers are being heard—for God always hears our prayers. May we be patient, persistent, and loving in the tending of our faith gardens through each season we encounter.

May your garden flourish and bear much good fruit.

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