

The World is Too Much With Us

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World Count: 689

*The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!*

--William Wordsworth

The world IS too much with us. On most days it seems too much to bear—volcanic eruptions, oil spills, endangered wildlife, immigration disputes, terrorists threats, recalls, tornados and tsunamis, a corrupt financial system, bickering politicians, a flawed economy and millions of people without homes, health care and jobs. Our grief's and losses mount up. The world is too much with us.

As always, I turn to nature and find solace in the springtime wonder of the earth emerging from her winter sleep. I dig in the dirt, plant a tree and seeds of hope. I listen to the sounds of awakening—birdsong, cooing of doves, and the distant sound of a lawn mower. I inhale the crisp clean air of the Oregon coast and take delight in sparrows darting about in graceful flight. When I've had my fill of the outside world, the crooking of the frogs on the riverbank, the moments of warm sunshine, the cleansing drizzle nourishing my seedlings, I pick a fresh bouquet of tulips, lilacs, and azalea for my mother's cobalt blue vase, and then turn towards home.

In my home when the world is too much with me, I do laundry. Cleaning the clothes helps cleanse my soul. Rounding up the laundry, filling the automatic washer with soap and water, listening to the swish-swish of the agitator making clothes and life clean once again comforts me. It changes things in a world where we often don't see results. Even plunging my hands into hot soapy dishwater and wringing out a steaming cloth is satisfying. It's real life. It's something I can do. Ordinary things.

And if the world is still too much with me, I turn to the kitchen. I gather leftovers and make a pot of soup. I make granola and bake bread as much for the comforting smell as the nourishment. By cooking, baking, weeding the garden, planting seeds of hope, and doing the wash, I feel grounded in the midst of world chaos. Simple things.

May gives us pink and white apple blossoms that drift to the earth like snowflakes. May brings us out of hibernation and dazzles our senses with the gaiety of the garden. May Day reminds us of childhood when we danced around the Maypole and left baskets of flowers for our neighbors. Cinco De Mayo, a nationwide celebration of Mexican heritage and pride is followed by Mother's Day, a day Julia Ward originally set aside in 1872 as an anti-war holiday. May is a month of remembrance—the birth of biologist Rachel Carson who wrote *Silent Spring* in 1962; the Kent State killings in 1970; Memorial

Day, which commemorates U.S. men, and women who've died in military service.

On a recent trip to Nehalem, I stop at the post office, and Postmaster Linda pinpoints the exact name of my White Shoulders perfume, one I've worn for 50 years. I stop in Manzanita at the grocery where my son-in-law works. He greets me with a smile, helps me find what I need and carries my groceries to the car. I run into the editor of the Citizen who asks how I'm doing after being sick; I compliment him on his article in Oregon Coast Magazine. On the sidewalk I meet up with a couple of friends who say they're glad to see me up and about once again. At the bank, I ask for crisp bills to give my daughter for her birthday, and the teller searches until she finds some, then calls me by name as she holds them up for me to examine.

Simple things, they move us along, ground us, give us something to look forward to, relish and remember. Whenever the world is too much with us, I remember it's the ordinary things in life that make a difference, and we're always free to make choices of kindness, forgiveness, and care--for ourselves, families, communities, and our planet.