

THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S GARDEN



"I wrote this and thought about my experience at St. Leo. I wanted to share it with you."

I've been reflecting on this all summer.

In May we had the opportunity to travel to Butchart Gardens outside Victoria, British Columbia. These world famous gardens feature an overwhelming abundance and variety of plants. In arranging travel from our hotel we were advised to get there early in the day before the crowds. This

attraction is a favorite excursion for cruise ships and tour buses.

We got there just as the gates opened on perfectly sunny day. We marveled at the sunken garden, the Japanese garden, and the rose garden. We took our time meandering the paths, enjoying plants we had never even seen before. Flowers we had seen before were especially unique due to their unique colors such as their trademark blue Tibetan poppy. There were plants in such a wide variety of shapes, colors, and sizes. Unique. Fascinating. Exquisite. Awesome. These were words we kept repeating as we tried to take in the variety of God's handiwork.

We enjoyed lunch and decided that there was so much to see that we should go through the gardens a second time viewing it in the afternoon light. By then the tours had arrived and the gardens were much more crowded.

Now the gardens took on a different atmosphere. Tourists blocked the paths as they posed for selfies (using "selfie sticks" which signs clearly prohibited but to them it didn't matter. I gave benefit of the doubt thinking maybe they can't read that sign because it's in English.) Favorite vista points from the morning were now blocked by the crowds. There were people from all over the world, speaking all different languages, dressed in all types of clothing, enjoying the gardens in their own way.

After a second trip through the gardens and the "black Friday sale" atmosphere of the gift shop (where is the end of the line???) we traveled back to our hotel. I reflected on the experience of the day. It struck

me that I was delighted by the variety of God's creation when it was planted there seemingly for my own personal enjoyment. The variety of God's other creation, namely the people who came in throngs after lunch, were more difficult to appreciate. Yet I know God made each of them in his own image and likeness. He delights in each person he created just as he delights in me. Their "human nature" is just as God would have them be. They experienced the gardens in their own personal way and enjoyed it just as I had.

I realized the crucial difference was my thought that their enjoyment infringed on my own. Could my attitude toward the other tourists (for I was surely one of them) be expanded to enjoy each of them for their own unique qualities, just as I had enjoyed the flowers? Back home I suggested this to a friend who quipped, "Yes - you could call them 'blooming' idiots."

What is our attitude toward the people and situations God puts in our lives? When it comes to plants, different is fascinating and enjoyable. When it comes to people, different can be challenging, puzzling, and downright scary. People are a challenge because they might demand something of us. They might "block our path." It feels safe to stick with what we know, people who think like us, act like us, and don't require much from us. But I don't want to live in that boring, monotonous world. I hope we can challenge ourselves to go out into God's "garden" and see people, the very pinnacle of His creation, with new eyes as we embrace what can be a unique opportunity to grow in love.

— Beth Hegedus

(Beth Hegedus did her Lay Pastoral Ministry Internship working at St. Leo's Food Pantry and with our youth group and plans to finish the program next spring. She continues to volunteer on Fridays at the Food Pantry and has helped with the summer youth program.)

