

Finding God in the Garden

by Julianne McCullagh



Daffodils in the front garden of our new house became an annual reminder of God's presence in every season.

We moved into our first house in the suburbs in November, shortly before Thanksgiving. The house was about 50 years old. To say that the previous owners liked to grow things would be a statement of the obvious; trimming and clearing the yard and garden would occupy many of our weekends during the coming spring.

An Abundance of Natural Gifts

We began clearing the property as the children played. In the back yard stood two tall pine trees that framed a hollowed-out area in the ground. Our kids and their friends soon transformed the area into a natural playhouse with a pine needle floor. A bed of ivy covered most of the yard, and much was eventually cleared for a swing set and picnic table.

Working on the front yard, we felt like the prince in the tale of Sleeping Beauty who had to cut down the overgrown briars to make his way into the castle to rescue the princess. Two large evergreen bushes stood guard on either side of the entrance to the front porch. The bushes had to go because they destroyed any chance of the sun's warming our living room. We replaced them with smaller bushes that were less overwhelming and that allowed the sun to blanket the front of the house.

About a week before Easter, we were surprised when shoots pushed their way through the soil in the front garden. Before long, these shoots turned into flowers with sunny faces and delicate dresses. A bit of song from *Mary Poppins* came to mind whenever we walked up the front path: *The daffodils are smiling at the doves*. We had planted azalea bushes and some sturdy green shrubs; our city upbringings did not include education in the care and tending of bulbs.

One day a neighbor walked across the street and commented on how much better the place looked with the overgrowth cleared away. She also told us about the daffodils. The son of the previous owners had planted these bulbs on a cold pre-spring day several years ago while his mother was at work. He didn't tell her about them; instead, he let the daffodils' appearance surprise his mother when spring came. Every year the flowers came back, a reminder of this act of love and generosity.

God's Love Revealed in Nature

Saint Ignatius of Loyola taught us that all things of this world—from creation to ourselves, to the things we make and do—are gifts from God and can be our means of recognizing and drawing closer to God. We leave a legacy of some kind with everyone we meet, whether we want to or not. Every time I see daffodils, I am reminded of this act of love and generosity from a son to his mother, a small but beautiful reminder of the countless acts of love and generosity given by our Father to each of his children.



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