

A Homily for Summer
June 3, 2018
The Rev. Dn. Nancy Casey Fulton

“May my words be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.”

After a long winter, and an even longer April that featured a sleet storm, we dare to believe it’s summer. Not in actual calendar days, but in hot sun, and open windows letting in sweet breezes. The gardeners among us have been weeding, for us the stubborn black wort, which returns whether you chop its runners apart or simply pull the roots out gently. We will soon head off to our two weeks the beach, and many of you will be traveling as well, or at least enjoying a meal from your grill, relaxing on lawn chairs as the night comes on slowly. And in our worship today—in prayers of the people and in canticles—we celebrate the wonders of creation.

And, for some of us, it’s baseball season. My maternal grandpa was a great fan of the Detroit Tigers: God help you if you made noise when he was listening to Ernie Harwell on the radio broadcast, or, in later years, watching the game on his new color TV. But those sounds—of the play-by-play, of the crack of the bat—were summer for me. They still are, those rituals of the season.

Earlier last week the fans at Comerica Park experienced a bit of a sideshow that’s not usual at a baseball game. (We missed it; we’d wandered off to do something else; some of you might have seen it.) A goose landed on the field, then began running about frantically, trying to figure out how to escape this enormous field ringed with row after row of screaming fans. When it finally lifted off, it crashed into the scoreboard and fell back to the ground, stunned.

A veterinarian who was in the stands offered help, and soon had the goose bundled in her arms, her jacket wrapped tightly around its bill to keep it from biting her. She took it to a wild animal veterinary clinic, where it recovered and has been launched back into the wilderness.

This goose’s close encounter with an environment that must have seemed alien to it reminded me of Mary Oliver’s poem, “Wild Geese.”

Let me read it for you:

Wild Geese

*You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.*

*Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun
and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.*

*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting --
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.*

We are one with all of creation. And these lazy, all-too-brief days of summer thrust us into a world that can seem alien in the depths of winter. These summer days can remind us that we have a place “in the family of things.” And so we give thanks for the richness of this season, and for this time to wonder at the Creator who made it all.

