

There Grows a SONflower



Last winter my husband and I decided to transform a former vegetable garden spot into a country flower garden. Birdhouses were built, plans for plant locations were drawn and trees, shrubs and some perennials were purchased and planted. In the spring, a flat of annuals was added and as a final touch, my husband gave me a small bird feeder for our country garden.

As expected, birds moved into the birdhouses, the flowers grew and flourished (well, most of them), and the birds came to nibble at the birdseed. Our country bird haven was a reality.

Later that fall, I had plenty of time to admire the garden and recall some of its history. Some of the annuals had died and had been replaced, extra plants and shrubs (too inexpensive to resist) had been added, a charming white country fence trimmed one side and day lilies had been planted. It is indeed a beautiful spot, but the most striking thing in the garden is a sunflower. Certainly, not in my plans, but as it lifts its seed-filled head to the sky, I consider its origins.

I think back to the bird feeder - at first I was filling it with the regular bird seed and I found that the birds not only ate, but also scattered the seeds all over the place and soon our garden was filled with plants that closely resembled weeds. I came close to removing the bird feeder from the fertile soil. Then I decided to fill the feeder with just sunflower seed. The birds really liked that, but they also sent these seeds sailing onto the soil. Then they started appearing, God's special surprises - sunflowers - blooming where the seeds had fallen. I could have never planned them so well. As I consider this wonder of nature, I knew God had once again given me a parable to ponder.

In preparation for my job as a Lutheran educator, I did much planning. I planned for the physical needs - desks, chairs, cubbies. I planned for the aesthetic needs - catchy bulletin boards, friendly surroundings, cute posters. I planned for the academic needs with lesson plans and units. I prayed my classroom would be a place of learning and indeed it was although plans changed and some ideas got "filed" instead of used. It was so exciting watching these little ones read, write, add and subtract - but the greatest joy in my classroom was when I saw the SONflowers - those wonderful times when I knew that the Gospel has been received by the power of the Holy Spirit in a child. The result of the Gospel was and is AWESOME, demonstrated in the words of confession and forgiveness, the acts of love and kindness, the voices raised in joyful praise. I am reminded that God says the Word never returns empty, but it will accomplish the purpose for which It was sent. (Is. 55:11) I praise God that the seed of faith was planted in me at baptism, that it was nourished by the Word and that I have been called to do the great task of sharing the Gospel with others. Yes, I thank God for my sunflowers, but I praise God for the SONflowers. I pray each of us will continue to scatter the seeds - the seeds of the SON and may you rejoice each time you see a SONflower.

**When we sow the seed,
God will give the increase
1 Corinthians 3:6; Mark 4:26-29**