Special Love Good Commemorative Edition

Hearth & Field

A Journal. An Invitation. A Quest for Real Life.

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Letter from the Editor

In the thick of lockdown, as the world took a short intermission from its cacophonous motion, a group of writers and artists found each other and found in each other a commonality: they had all been hearing music. I will try to explain.

The beauty of the natural world speaks a truth — you might even say it sings a truth — which resounds throughout creation. Yet, to the untrained ear, it can be drowned out by the noise of our modern age. Coronavirus destroys, for a time, the senses of taste and smell; the other great pandemic of our day may be our lost ability to hear — to hear, that is, the transcendent melody of the mundane.

And what is this harmonious truth, vying against chaos for our attention? Simply this: real life is life-giving. Just as artificiality drains us, real life — good, honest, earthy life — vivifies us.

As lockdown struck, as we were "forced" back into kitchens and gardens and other peaceful places, as we mingled once more in the company of spouses and children and our own selves, this still, soft truth could be heard a bit more clearly. During these slower days, the writers and artists, whom I'd mentioned, began talking to one another and discovered they had all been hearing the same melody, and they all wanted to join it and amplify its strains. The result is *Hearth & Field* — a new journal committed to helping people, themselves included, to live a real life, to be freed from dependence on fragile, artificial systems, and to hear the beauty that echoes through God's world.

What you now hold in your hands is some of the very first fruit of the labor: a special, pre-release, commemorative issue, published in conjunction with Love Good. The folks at Love Good are doing wonderful, important work. They are hearing and sharing this transcendent music, in both a figurative and literal sense, with patrons the world over. Both Love Good and *Hearth & Field* believe that beauty is the entry point to a knowledge of reality. Beauty offers the first, come-hither gaze, which invites us to embrace truth. So, together, we hope to help you experience the fact that creation is beautiful. Actually, it is more than merely beautiful: it is full of beauty — full, not as bellies are full of diminishing things, but, as wombs are full of living things, which grow greater every day. It is, in the words of the priest and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, "charged with the grandeur of God." Given this shared mission, we have created for Love Good patrons this early look at some of the writing, art, and ideas that will be available online and in upcoming print editions of *Hearth & Field*.

I hope you will find in these pages a useful guide to help you train your ear to the amazing, grace-filled melody of real life. Herein, Mr. Jimmy Mitchell proposes the art of living well during uncertain times in a world-premiere excerpt from his upcoming book. Dr. Ryan Hanning explores the resurgence of the time-honored discipline of homeschooling, while Mr. Jason Craig leads you out into the rugged, yet realizable, terrain of homesteading. Through recipes, reviews, and reflections, our talented authors will help reacquaint you with the many facets of living and loving life. You'll discover tidbits of nitty-gritty know-how for breaking up the soil and spreading the table. You'll learn practical things — such as how to sharpen knives and whet appetites, and how to make memories making apple cider with your kids or sauerkraut with your dad — and interesting things — such as the culture-building charisms of opera and beer. You'll want to cross the threshold from suburbia to farm life with Mrs. Gina Loehr and reclaim your landline with Mrs. Becky Greene. Be sure not to miss Mr. Rob Drapeau's "Born Upside Down," a canny new column about the old art of being human. And there's so much more. Along the way, you'll note that we task each of our authors with duties in both thinking and doing. You'll see what we mean.

So, thank you for taking the time to slow down with us for a while. I hope you'll read about, enter into, and engage with those things that lead you toward real life. But above all, I hope you'll rediscover the beauty and joy of your own hearth and fields.

Matthew Giambrone

The Power of Doing it Yourself

Mrs. April Jaure

A few months after my college graduation, I gave birth to my first child. Like a steaming cup of coffee, the theoretical world I was used to was both invigorating and cozy. Shortly before my last finals week, a test revealed the presence of a new life growing inside me, and motherhood swiftly thrust me into an entirely foreign way of being. Without prompting from me, my body began forcefully reacting to smells and started swelling at my midsection. Months later, as soon as my newborn daughter sounded her first cry, motherhood promulgated a crash course in practical living.

My husband and I made very little money in the early years of our marriage, and the simple necessity of making our money stretch as far as it could meant that I would endeavor to learn some previously unknown (to me) domestic, do-it-yourself skills.

It felt like a movie plot in which a skyrise-dwelling New Yorker decides on a whim to leave the city and buy a ranch. I would leave behind mornings of analyzing "The Red Wheelbarrow" over coffee with other English majors, to embrace some more practical, down-to-earth skills, like figuring out how to not burn dinner and how to keep my baby alive.

I hadn't been raised to think of homemaking as unfulfilling, but I admit it was an attitude that I somehow absorbed. Childless April would have never imagined homemaking in her future. But, I was surprised at the intensity of the love I felt for my daughter, and I hadn't anticipated how painful it would be to leave her to go to work daily. So, a couple of years (and another daughter) later, just as soon as we could squeeze by on one income, I became a stay-at-home mom. We would have to live simply, to be sure, but I wouldn't have to leave my young children every day, and we would have more time as a family, which was a value in and of itself. I would cook, bake, and sew clothes to help us get by, and life would be perfect.

> *If it weren't for motherhood and the necessity of acquiring some practical skills, I think I could have lived my whole life without being truly present for any of it.*

The only problem was that I didn't have much experience in cooking or baking, and my one foray in sewing had resulted in an unwearable shirt. But now I had a family to take care of, so I jumped into this new adventure with motivation and tenacity. I watched internet tutorials and read DIY blogs. I learned how to make my own eco-friendly (and budget-friendly) laundry soap. I patched jeans and sheets. For Christmas and birthdays, I spent hours producing homemade gifts. I sewed pillows and aprons, crafted hand-bound journals, wrapped beeswax candles, and baked loaves of chocolate chip banana bread. Rather than the mundane drudgery that I had expected, learning to create so many things with my own two hands cultivated something deep inside me, and a developing satisfaction began to sprout.

If, as I worked on creating something, I became lost in thought and wasn't paying attention to the task at hand (a reality that happened more than I care to admit in those days), my work, predictably, wouldn't turn out well. But such attention to the present moment was a skill I had to learn. Eventually, I didn't need to rip out seams and redo them so often, and — to my family's relief — my bread got much more palatable. Like the literal stretching it required of me, motherhood also exacted a figurative, but real, stretching as I grew to be attentive to the here and now.

Some people view the human person solely as his or her thoughts. As Descartes says, "I think therefore I am." But I see the human person as an embodied spirit, that is, both body and soul — intimately connected, mixed up, and joined together. Before learning to create tangible goods with my hands, I was ignoring a vital part of who I am: my body. I ate mostly quick and easy food to keep myself going, and, occasionally, I slept. But no matter what I was doing, my attention was always someplace else rather than on what was right in front of me. Once I was able to create something for the benefit of people I love, it seemed like a neglected, yet vital, seed within me was finally germinating and rising from its long dormition.

We are at a unique time in human history when we can live our lives largely separated from the physical realities around us. We move from our perfectly climate-controlled houses, to our climate-controlled cars, to our climate-controlled offices. We don't have to gather, grow, or hunt food. Whatever we happen to need, we simply order online. Twenty-four hours later, it arrives at our doorstep — complete, finished,

and ready for use. For many people in our so-called *information economy,* work consists of producing non-tangible goods or services. Collectively, these modern realities can condition our attention toward concepts that bestow little benefit to our lives rather than toward the quotidian moments that make up the bulk of our lived experiences. We spend too much time on things that don't actually contribute to making our lives rich and meaningful.

As someone who had based her identity in receiving academic accolades, one wouldn't think that I would feel much satisfaction in learning to bake a loaf of bread or crochet a dishcloth. But figuring out how to accomplish these essential tasks made me feel capable and powerful in a way I hadn't experienced before. Maybe none of this seems that exciting from the outside, but the sense of accomplishment and empowerment I felt was the same as if my life really was following the New Yorker-turned-Wyoming-rancher movie arc where, just as a powerful thunderstorm knocks out the phone line, the newbie rancher realizes her heifer is in labor and she's going to have to midwife the birth solo. After a tense night, as the first photons of the morning begin trickling into the barn, the wet and muddy rancher witnesses the birth of a healthy calf. In my reality, learning to craft these simple, but crucial items taught me to be attuned to the present moment, which is to say, it taught me to be present to my own life. I had been so accustomed to living life in my head, I'm sad to say, that, if it weren't for motherhood and the necessity of acquiring some practical skills, I think I could have lived my whole life without being truly present for any of it.

Though we may be tempted to work more in order to achieve our goals, it would be worth it to consider the flourishing that could happen if, rather than working more, we worked differently. Perhaps we need a return to our bodies — to reverently care for them with the nourishing food we make, or even grow, ourselves. Maybe we need to learn how to build or sew; to quilt, bake, or plant. Maybe we can learn to allow ourselves to tinker, make mistakes, and try again, to figure things out. This way of living takes time, to be sure, but perhaps it is that vital, missing core that has been lying fallow within us for far too long.

This way of living takes time, to be sure, but perhaps it is that vital, missing core that has been lying fallow within us for far too long.

Mrs. April Jaure

Mrs. Jaure lives in Wisconsin with her work-from-home husband and their four homeschooled children. She writes from a sun-filled corner where she fights for desk space with her two cats. When not writing or homeschooling, she spends her time educating couples in fertility awareness.

Now that she's waxed philosphic, April would like to get more specific, roll up her sleeves, and teach you all about *The Power of Canning Applesause.* Ok, she doesn't actually call it that, but turn the page to check out her helpful tutorial.

"

Fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions.

"

G.K. Chesterton

Preserving a Simple Applesauce for Winter

I didn't grow up canning — my parents didn't grow any of our food, although my father and brothers occasionally brought home game after hunting in the cold mountains of Wyoming — but, as an adult living in the Midwest, with its numerous farmers markets, CSAs, and hot, humid summers (wonderful for gardening), I took it up.

At first canning seemed a bit intimidating, and some people warned me off of it, saying that it was too difficult. It does take a bit of planning to get all the canning supplies and set things up in the kitchen, but it's an easy and enjoyable process if done right.

This year, my family picked apples at an orchard. I decided to preserve some applesauce. Because I want to minimize the sugar that my family consumes, and because applesauce is sweet enough for us without sugar, I did not add any. You can add sugar or cinnamon if you wish, but I prefer just plain old applesauce! Whatever food you decide to preserve, be sure to follow a canning recipe and the instructions for canning that particular food.

—Mrs. April Faure

What You Need

Canning supplies:

Stock pot with well-fitting lid and metal trivet for bottom of pot (or a water bath canner with rack)
Mason jars (3 lbs of apples will yield approximately 2 pints of applesauce)
New canning lids
Mason jars and rims
Tools — lid lifter, canning funnel, jar lifter, and kitchen tongs

Applesauce supplies:

Potato masher
Hand-held immersion blender or food processor to make smooth applesauce (unless you like your sauce to be a little chunky!)
Optional: apple corer, good vegetable peeler

Ingredients:

Apples & Lemon Juice

What You Do

The first step is, as the French say, *mise en place*. That is, make sure you have all your ingredients and materials handy. Also, take some time to set up your workstation to allow for a smooth canning experience. What burner will the apples be cooked on? Where will the jars be placed to fill with the applesauce? The canning supplies will need to be nearby.

Place the jars in boiling water, then removed to cool in a place where they will not be disturbed for twelve hours.

Sanitize Mason jars by running them in the dishwasher. Try to time it so that your dishwasher cycle is complete about the time the applesauce will be ready to place in the jars. If you don't have a dishwasher, you can also sanitize your jars by placing them in simmering water for a minimum of ten minutes or until they are ready to use.

Next, core and peel apples and cut into fourths or eighths. To prevent browning, place in a bowl of water with 1/4 cup of lemon juice for every one cup of water.

Place sliced apples into a pot with a couple of inches of water in the bottom. Cover with lid and heat on medium-high heat for ten to fifteen minutes. If needed, you can add more water, but be careful as you do not want runny applesauce. It may take less or more time depending on the type and quantity of apples you are heating, as well as the maturity of the apples when they were picked.

While the applesauce is cooking, place the metal rivet in the bottom of your stock pot and fill the pot with water and bring to a boil. Remember that once the filled jars are placed in the pot, they will displace some of the water, however, once all the jars are in, they will also need to be fully submerged with at least an inch of water over their tops. Estimate the water depth accordingly. One tip is to prepare a tea kettle with boiling water just in case you need to add more boiling water to the pot. If you add too much water initially, you can simply ladle some out as needed.

Wash the canning lids well with soap and water and set aside.

Once all the apple slices are soft enough to be mashed with a fork or potato masher, they are ready. Add one tablespoon of lemon juice for every three pounds of apples you used. Mash well with potato masher, then use a hand-held immersion blender to get really smooth applesauce. You can also use a food processor to blend the applesauce by working in batches. You want hot applesauce to place in the jars, so if you use a food processor, return the applesauce to the pot and keep at a simmer until all the applesauce is ready to be put in the jars.

Next, remove hot jars from the dishwasher or the pot where they have been simmering (this could be the same pot in which the filled jars will be processed). Using a canning funnel, ladle hot applesauce into the hot jars, leaving 1/2 inch headspace.
Remove air that may be trapped in the jar by running a plastic knife or non-metallic spatula (or the end of your lid lifter) along the inside of the jar. Wipe the rim with the clean, damp dishcloth. Place lid on jars, and screw on rims until they are finger tight, that is, not loose, but not overly tight.

Using the jar lifter, place jars into the boiling water bath. (In my twelve-quart stock pot, seven pint-size jars fit perfectly.) Boil for twenty minutes. Remove from heat and allow to sit in hot water for another five minutes.

Using the jar lifter once more, remove jars from the water bath and place on the counter. Allow to sit undisturbed for twelve hours. You may hear a pop as the lids seal.

The next day, check to make sure all the jars are sealed. When you press down in the center of the lid with your finger, there should be no give. If the lid pops up, then you will need to refrigerate the applesauce and use within a week, but otherwise the jars can be labeled with contents and date and stored for a year.

I began with about nine pounds of apples and canned seven pints of applesauce. It isn't much for my family of six, but I'm happy that I will have to buy a few fewer pints of applesauce this winter. I am also looking forward to topping a jar or two with some pretty fabric and sharing them with friends and family.

Finally, don't be afraid, but don't be stupid. Humans have been preserving food for millenia, but our immune system is no better at dealing with food-born illness than it was millenia ago. Take care to be clean when you preserve your food. If any of your preserves swell in the jar, explode, or smell off-putting, discard the contents of that jar and don't eat it.

Finding My Way Back to Reality

A Raised Garden's Humble Roots

Mr. Nathan Runde

This spring I built a raised vegetable garden. I built a raised vegetable garden from boards milled from an old oak tree. In fact, I built a raised vegetable garden from boards milled from an old oak tree that were planed down by my wife's grandfather on his farm in rural Wisconsin. This raised garden has roots.

My wife's grandfather was a man who built his first house with his own two hands. He was the kind of man who had a massive garden, weeded to perfection. He was the kind of man who canned hundreds of jars of fruits and vegetables every summer and in the fall pressed gallon upon gallon of fresh apple cider. He used to donate heaps of produce to the local school, and he was a proud patron of any local business. He was a down-to-earth, humble kind of man.

My own father has twenty five raised vegetable gardens (not including flower beds, he is sure to note), a chicken coop, and a small orchard. He was a farm boy who grew up to be a landscaper. But, as the saying goes, "you can take the boy out of the farm, but you can't take the farm out of the boy." So, that farm boy is showing clearly again as my father has now downscaled his landscaping business to upscale his garden. In the summertime, my mother often proudly proclaims, "Our grocery bill is cut in half!" My dad also saves everything and can often be found tinkering with a new garden tool or fashioning something from reused materials. My father is a down-to-earth, humble kind of man.

The word *humble* is a rather elusive adjective that's worth taking a moment to explore. The term has its roots in the Latin word humus which translates to ground, earth, or soil. So, the word *humble* is well encompassed by our English phrase *down-to-earth*. But this phrase might still remain a bit ambiguous. So what does it mean for someone to be down-to-earth, to be humble?

To be humble — to have humility — is to live like these two great patriarchs of my family. Humility is working the soil and cooperating with the bugs and the beasts. Humility is knowing what kind of work it takes to construct your own house by hand. Humility is having to look the untamable elements in the face and say, "You are utterly wild, but perhaps we could be partners." Humility is being integrally rooted in the labor and processes involved in sustaining human life. In a word, to be humble is to be grounded.

On the other hand, a lack of humility might look like this: I wake up in my gas-heated home and don my nylon clothes made in some sweatshop thousands of miles away. I scramble up a few eggs — forty-nine cents per dozen! — where did these even come from? I bundle up to the point of complete insulation from the elements and sprint outside to my car, where the remote start has prepared a toasty sauna for me. Then, as I drive to my job, I need to roll my window down to let some cold air in because I'm sweating. At lunch I throw away my "Happy Cows" cheese stick because I'm not hungry for it. The cow on the package smiles up at me from the mound of waste, reading "Happy cows come from California." I think for a moment about Wisconsin being the true dairy state — how could any self-respecting cow be happy anywhere else? But I don't think of everything it took to get that little cheese stick here: the farmer, the cow, the factory worker, the trucker. I just move on. I am disconnected from my roots. You may have noticed that I continually used the personal pronoun "I". That's because I am not speaking in the abstract; this is my life.

I may not be completely disconnected from reality, but somewhere along the line, I have become removed from the labor and processes that it takes to sustain my lifestyle. I live in my city home. I buy all my groceries from the store. I shop regularly from the corporate giants that dominate the U.S. supply chain. I have become uprooted.

That's where this raised garden comes in. I would like to replant my roots in the humble soil that my fathers tilled for me. This raised garden bed is the start of my return to contact with reality. It is a beginning to befriending wild nature and cooperating with its Creator. It is a step outside of my cushy modern life into the rugged, rustic, humble lifestyle that calls out to me from my roots. It is my first attempt at reconnecting with the way of life that my father and my wife's grandfather showed me.

This raised garden bed is the start of my return to contact with reality. It is a beginning to befriending wild nature and cooperating with its Creator.

Now the year is growing old. The world has changed its colors, and the air is cold, and my little garden is saying its golden-leafed farewells. But the harvest was good; it helped provide for my family this year, at least in some small way. And we canned fifteen jars of food! It's not much, really, but it is a start. Perhaps, like myself, you feel a bit swept away in your modern lifestyle. Perhaps you have a nagging sense that something is wrong here. Perhaps you feel uprooted and wondering how to get back. I don't write this to guilt-trip anyone or completely condemn the comfort of modern life. I do write this to encourage you to take a small step with me back to our humble roots. Maybe next spring you could build a raised vegetable garden.

Mr. Nathan Runde writes from his home in northern Wisconsin, where he lives with his wife and baby son. If your own garden happens to have produced a bumper crop of cabbage, then be sure to join Mr. Runde (and his father) on page 30, where you'll learn how to make sauerkraut.

'Man Breaking Up The Soil'. Vincent van Gogh. 1883.

Preparing Garden Soil for Next Year

Mr. Tyler Story

Mark Twain famously advised, "Buy land, they're not making it anymore." If you'll forgive my mangling Mr. Clemens' aphorism, allow me to alter that advice: "Don't buy soil, there's no need to make any more." Or something to that effect.

On to business: One of the most common themes I hear when talking to people about starting a vegetable garden is the need to "buy soil." I'm frequently asked what kind of soil is best to buy, or what kind of soil is best to buy for a raised garden, or, most distressingly: "I've dug all the soil out of my garden area and thrown it away; what should I buy to replace it?"

Frequently, the upshot of the assumption that soil is a commodity is the decision that one can't possibly plant a garden until one can "afford" soil, or until one's husband finishes building the raised beds, or until the nursery re-stocks a particular brand of vermiculite, or until one finds a better "soil recipe" than the one used last season. This is nonsense. With very few exceptions, if you have a plot of land, you have all the soil you need.

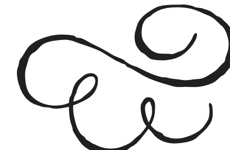
What you need (especially if, like me, you live in a desert region) is to improve the soil you already have, and that is very simple indeed. Select your garden spot and clear it of grass and weeds. Layer on top of your existing native soil a good 5 to 6 inches of organic amendment such as compost, or a combination of compost and manure. Using your spading fork, turn that layer into your existing soil to a depth of 10 to 12 inches. Rake it out, break up the large clods, and you're ready to go.

Do you now have perfect garden soil? No. Good garden soil is not something you can buy, nor is it something you can achieve instantly. Good garden soil develops over time and there are no shortcuts. (You'll notice the title of this piece mentioned something about *next* year.) Each season, as you prepare for the next planting, repeat the process: layer, dig, rake, plant. In warmer climates with multiple growing seasons, you can amend your soil three times a year.

Start now, and by next year you'll have very good garden soil; by this time the following year, you can modestly call it "almost perfect."

Mr. Tyler Storey writes from his home
(and occasionally from his urban garden) in central Arizona.

Grounded by the Landline



Mrs. Becky Greene

When the phone rings in our house, you will likely hear one of five children greet the caller with, "Greene House, this is Michael (or Donovan or Avery or Caleb or Kateri). May I ask who's calling, please?" We have taught our children to follow this script as part of our family policy that phone etiquette is of utmost importance. Even if Kateri (our four-year-old) holds the phone like a walkie-talkie and doesn't always know what to do with the telemarketer on the other end, her courteous response is a delightful surprise to most of our callers. Back in the day (aka the 1980s), one of the worst punishments was being grounded from the phone. Today, in our home, our kids will be grounded by — not from — our landline.

Long before our kids were old enough to use the phone, I realized it represented more than just physically calling in and out of our house; it symbolized a metaphorical connection between our family and the world. Over the years, convinced their new-fangled mobiles could serve as primary communication devices, many of my friends and family dropped their landlines to save on monthly bills. But my husband and I made an intentional decision to hang onto our old-fashioned home phone, so we didn't inadvertently hang up on some old-fashioned ideals.

Anyone who grew up in the telecommunications era that spanned the time between Alexander Graham Bell's death and Mark Zuckerburg's birth will remember landlines: devices wired to a wall and featuring a rotary dial or push-button number pad for placing calls. Handsets were attached by long, coiled cords, famous for being curled around the fingers of flirty teenagers as they gabbed the night away, or entangling many a cooking mother who attempted to make dinner while chatting with a friend. Whenever the phone would ring, everyone in the house would race to pick up the receiver, eager to know with whom the next conversation would ensue. Today, only occasionally do we "reach out and touch someone" with a phone call, resorting instead to text message, email, or social media posts to communicate with others. And caller ID has eliminated the mystery that once hyped up anticipation over who's on the other end of the call, forcing instead our sober discernment over whether we answer at all. The anonymity of "unknown caller", which once stoked curiosity, now prompts perturbation and elicits cynical eye rolls and under-the-breath muttering about scammers undoubtedly out to steal our Lucky Charms.

The cell phone, with its extended mobility and daring capabilities that allow for quick checks of weather and traffic reports, is certainly more convenient than the stationary home phone hindered by its non-internet connectivity. I admit, I'm quite attached to its un-attachment to the wall. But that is the problem.

While the cell phone unties us from the home, we've become tied to it and its promises for more customized and interpersonal connection. We're entangled in an invisible tether that tightens with every new upgrade. In the very quest to belong and be in relationship with others, we have inverted the reach for human contact and turned each person into his own little universe contained in a handheld device. Where the landline gives us direct access to the outside world, the cell phone draws us in quite the opposite direction, giving access only to a digital world that calls us ever inward. The landline has become essentially obsolete, replaced by the pocket computer we call our "cell", a nifty pun for the on-the-go freedom that has imprisoned us by an addiction we can't, or perhaps won't, escape. Cell phones invite us into instant "relationship" while actually isolating us from our family identity and real-person engagement; they detach us from the sense of community and shared experience that is a primal part of the human condition. We link and sync, but we don't ever really connect. We no longer possess phones — they possess us.

> *We no longer possess phones — they possess us.*

Even as I progressed from no cell phone to flip-phone to smartphone, I found myself more and more seduced by the pings and chimes of social media alerts, texts, and emails. I've caught myself staring at the phone in my hand, busily scrolling and scribing on a tiny touchpad while one of my children asks me a question. I do not see the child. I do not hear the question. I only vaguely hear myself mumble, "Just a sec. Wait, what did you say?"

Strangely, as society has unplugged its telecommunications from the wall and taken them outside the home in an effort to be more available, people have become startlingly less available to those who count the most. We have all been to get-togethers where attendees never actually get together. They bury their faces in their phones rather than engage the other people present. Children used to take tin cans and string to create their own communication gadgets. Now, many get cell phones before they get the training wheels off their bikes. Parents yack on their phones while their kids scroll through Instagram on theirs, none ever conversing with the others. Nature eludes children even as they scamper through it. Instead of playing on a playground and catching one another in a game of tag, kids look through their phones to "catch" virtual Pokemon perched atop the jungle gym the kids ought to be climbing. Trips to the park, which once meant spending time with family, now offer the members a break from one another — an opportunity to grab a bench and spend some "quality time" in cyberspace.

It became clear to us that, without making some rebellious decisions to keep us grounded, we would become subject to the same fate — each member individually wired into the virtual world, but completely disconnected from one another. My husband and I knew that, as our kids got older, we'd be faced with the question of whether to get them a personal phone or let them use ours. We opted for "the home phone." It's not Mom's phone or Daddy's phone or their phone; it's

the phone, our phone. It has become a symbol of our family's unity, a reflection of the oneness that a couple and their family are meant to represent. You can't bypass the rest of the members of the family when trying to reach one of us; we are "The Greenes". There is pride and solidarity in that title. It has meaning.

> *It became clear to us that, without making some rebellious decisions to keep us grounded, we would become subject to the same fate....*

In this device that connects us to the rest of the world, our kids have something tangible that reflects their membership in our family. They are indispensable parts of a "we." As such, they will never be alone with just their phone. If somebody wants to reach someone in our home, we're all going to know.

This is why I will not surrender our landline. It is one of the few pieces of technology that serves as a centerpiece to the unity of home life. It may not be able to track our whereabouts with satellite technology or monitor how many steps we've walked in a day. It may not give me instant access to every coffee shop within a thirty-mile radius or let me check Amazon's prices on that taco sleeping bag I've been eyeing, but it does allow me to teach my kids that the world does not revolve around them; the world does not revolve around me. And perhaps the greatest lesson they'll learn is that a cell phone is not better company than they are.

Mrs. Becky Greene

Mrs. Greene is wife to husband Mr. Greene (aka Steve) and mother to their five children. She has written and presented on topics ranging from authentic femininity to homeschooling to, even, aviation. Becky and Steve host a popular podcast entitled *The Catholic Conversation*. When she's not writing, podcasting, or attempting to get dinner on the table, she can be found pulling her hair out over mismatched socks, Legos on the floor, and temper tantrums about the toothpaste being too spicy.

She is also, as of quite recently, versed in the ways of homemade apple cider — see the story & recipe on page 22.

Is "reading" not your thing?

Listening counts as reading these days.

At age six or so, our editor's daughter was feeling exhausted from several minutes of an attempted phonics lesson. She defiantly declared, "When I grow up I'm going to be a movie star, so that I won't have to know how to read."

If you, too, are getting tired of parsing written words and would like us to do the grunt work, head over to HearthAndField.com. There you'll find much of this journal's content in audio format, read by real human beings (though, of course, not by movie stars).

Homemade Laundry Soap

Cleanliness is next to godliness. But many commercial laundry soaps contain numerous chemicals found to be dangerous to humans and the environment. Dangerous chemicals, to the best of our knowledge, are not close to godliness.

Thankfully, we have a homemade laundry soap that you're going to love. It uses gentle, naturally-occurring ingredients that won't pollute our waterways or our homes with toxic substances. Many grocery stores have these ingredients in their laundry aisles — they cost no more than ten dollars. The soap takes less than fifteen minutes to make.

This can completely replace store-bought detergents in your home. Use it for everything, even infant laundry and cloth diapers. We have never seen it irritate sensitive, newborn skin, so you can feel comfortable replacing your infant laundry soap with this recipe.

Use 1/4 - 1/2 cup for a large load of laundry. A family of six can easily whip up a batch and be set for three months or so — and thereby be well on their way to godliness, or, at least, to less toxic clothing. Happy washing!

What You Need

Fels-Naptha laundry bar

20-Mule Team Borax detergent booster

Arm & Hammer super washing soda

Large bucket or small tote

Blender

Cutting board

Knife

What You Do

1. Place the bar of Fels-Naptha onto the cutting board and cut into small pieces. You may grate it if you wish, or just cut it with a knife, as if you were cutting butter into flour to make a pie crust.

2. Put the cut-up soap into the blender and pulse until the soap has a more sand-like consistency. It's okay if you have some pea-sized clumps.

3. Transfer the blended soap into a large bowl or bucket. Slowly pour in the Borax and washing soda, and mix all together with a spoon or by hand. Pouring slowly will help cut down on the soap "dust" floating in the air that can be inhaled.

4. Store in bucket / tote. Wash your hands and rinse the blender well.

Becoming Human Again

Mr. Rob Drapeau

I recently had the good fortune of meeting one of planet earth's newest inhabitants, a beautiful baby boy named Ulric. Ulric is the second child and first son of two of my good friends. He is, according to his mother, "the best baby of all the babies," and, by the looks of him, I think she may be right.

I say this because when I popped over to their house with a postpartum meal, I spied, resting upon the boy's little shoulders, the most beautifully-shaped noggin my eyes had ever seen. It was a rosy sphere of Euclidean perfection. Two dainty ears, perched like perfect pink butterflies on opposite sides of his well-formed cranium, parenthesized his serene face. Long-lashed lids covered the globes of his sleeping eyes while his tiny nose twitched above petite, pursed lips. Here was a babe who appeared to debunk the Churchill Rule that states every human child, irrespective of race, religion, or social standing, enters the world disguised as a diminutive Winston Churchill, the wispy-haired, bulldog-faced, former Prime Minister of Great Britain.

I knew at a glance that Ulric had not come into the world via the normal channels. His mother confirmed that he had in fact been delivered by C-section. I was willing to accept that Ulric was indeed the best baby of all the babies based entirely on his appearance. I should have known better. Babies are crafty creatures. They make the tops of their heads smell like heaven to trick us into believing that they are cherubs. Their other end has a redolence of its own that betrays the true predicament of their species. I mean, of course, that babies are born upside down.

Members of a Fallen Race

If what a third of the people on our planet believes about the human condition is true, every child who enters the world is a member of a fallen race. (There are some notable exceptions.) Some people object to this assertion. As the Catholic apologist and soapbox orator Frank Sheed puts it, they think it's unfair that Adam and Eve should eat the apple while we get the tummy ache.

But those of us who believe in the doctrine of original sin don't blame babies for the Fall anymore than we blame a poor child for growing up destitute after its prodigal great-grandfather frittered away the family fortune decades before the child was born. Original sin doesn't mean children are responsible for their predecessors' actions, but it does mean that they suffer the consequences.

The English writer and lay theologian G.K. Chesterton once claimed that original sin is "the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved." Anyone who disagrees with this has obviously never been on Twitter. Or been promoted to the grown-ups' table at Thanksgiving. Or spent more than three minutes watching the news in 2020. One can deny the Fall of Man or dismiss it out of hand as an out-dated, unenlightened dogma, but which is harder to believe: that humanity is fallen or that all seven billion of us were immaculately conceived? That's supposed to be a rhetorical question, but many of us were brought up believing that — at least for Americans — both of these narratives could be true. As a Catholic whose father was a patriotic American military man, I know I was.

…which is harder to believe: that humanity is fallen or that all seven billion of us were immaculately conceived?

Competing Narratives

Growing up, I took many things for granted that contradicted the religious doctrines to which I had given my assent. My faith informed me that Adam and Eve's original act of disobedience broke the universe and opened an impassable chasm between man and his Maker. It taught that our first parents' prideful attempt to rise above their station led to their downfall and the loss of perfect happiness.

My country claimed something different. It claimed that nothing was impossible for the self-reliant, self-made American. It stated as irrefutable fact that I lived in the most exceptional nation in the history of the world. Nothing was so broken that American ingenuity couldn't fix it. Here, progress was inevitable; failure, inexcusable. Pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps was a duty and an expectation in America. Rising above one's station wasn't the road to perdition; it was tradition. It wasn't the way to lose happiness, but the means of finding it.

I have strong reservations about one of these narratives now. I've eaten too many Thanksgiving dinners to doubt the first, but I haven't grown completely cynical about all aspects of the second yet. My current opinion of the land of my birth parallels that of the previously mentioned Prime Minister of Britain's opinion of democracy as a form of government: I believe the United States to be the worst country humanity has come up with so far — except for all the others. Especially on parchment, the United States remains noble and inspiring, but it is far from perfect and, unfortunately, seems to be trending downward.

> I believe the United States to be the worst country humanity has come up with so far — except for all the others.

Something Different?

My sense of humanity's (and my own) fallenness has been steadily increasing over the past several years, but I have never felt it more acutely than during these last few months of pandemic-induced, global cabin fever. Something feels different. An argument I got into with my two oldest daughters recently brought this home to me.

My girls were having a passionate discussion about what everyone in America was discussing passionately this summer when I overheard one of them use a logical fallacy. In what I intended to be a spirit of paternal correction, I shoehorned myself into their conversation and attempted to explain the importance of defining one's terms correctly when making an argument. I was taken aback when my comments were met with surprising hostility, especially considering I hadn't disagreed with either daughter. I was only trying to teach them how to fight fair.

At this, I failed spectacularly. The reason I failed– and the thing that left me most disturbed about the incident wasn't my daughters' alarming animosity, but my ferocious response to it. I entered the conversation as a mild-mannered Dr. Jekyll, but left as a rampaging Mr. Hyde. I'm still trying to repair the damage I did.

The dustup with my daughters left me utterly bewildered. It took me several very long weeks to process everything and begin to make sense of what went down. The incident caused me to consider my relationship with my own parents. I don't recall ever treating them as rudely as I felt my kids had treated me. Surely, I must have at some point, but if I had, I forgot about it long ago. What I do remember is that my parents never gave me a reason to fear them. Not once did they get as rabid with me as I had been towards my daughters. What was going on?

Lost

Everywhere I look, I see people reacting similarly to the undeniable fact that humanity is broken. They react (and overreact) in ways that reveal they have abandoned all hope — human or divine — of it ever being fixed. They have lost faith in both God and man.

Many religious people seem to have concluded that the Church, the State, and the heart of man, are irredeemably corrupt. They can't bring themselves to believe that the world can (or should) be pulled out of its nosedive, so they simply brace for impact. Meanwhile, secular society has grown so cynical about its institutions that, in addition to rejecting the possibility of recovering happiness in a restored relationship with a good God, it dismisses the possibility of happiness coming from an ever-improving, self-sufficient humanity. All the narratives have been rejected.

Left without a story, we've been set adrift. We don't know who we are or what our place in the cosmos is. We no longer act like civilized people who treat one another with respect and who settle their disputes like ladies and gentlemen. Instead, we lash out like cornered animals any time we perceive a threat. We are beastly to each other. We behave in ways that are less than human. The problem with behaving like — and treating others as if they were no more than — animals, is that, when we fail to respect the humanity of others, we kill it in ourselves.

Getting Right-Side Up

If we desire a more civilized, more humane society, this is not the way to bring it about. If everyone were to follow this course of action, it would set the human race back even further than Adam and Eve. We would revert to being effectively mere beasts. It would be a kind of second fall — not from divine grace, but from human nature.

> We have forgotten there's a whole lot more to our species than opposable thumbs.

This would be tragic because human beings are wonderful, even those of us who were born with elongated heads and puckered, prime ministerial faces. There is an art to being human, and we have forgotten it. We have forgotten there's a whole lot more to our species than opposable thumbs. Michelangelo's *David*, Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Chartres Cathedral, Pascal's Wager, Einstein's Theory of Relativity, Cubano sandwiches, *The Princess Bride* — all of these things give us reason to hope. We may have been born upside down, but we can still learn to walk erect.

If we want to preserve our humanity, we have to stop debasing ourselves and others. But, just as it doesn't make sense to argue about the quickest route to an unspecified destination, there's no point in trying to restore humanity if we don't first know what makes it special. We can only do this if we know what it means to be human. And that is what we will be exploring in this column in Hearth & Field — I hope you come along for the adventure.

Mr. Rob Drapeau

Mr. Drapeau is a writer from Phoenix, AZ. He is an editor at *Hearth & Field* and writes the Born Upside Down column. He and his lovely wife have seven hilarious children who are way better than all the fugitive pleasures they would have been able to afford if they didn't. He loves cooking, playing guitar, and G. K. Chesterton. He laughs at his own jokes.

Rob's Puerto Rican culinary prowess is on full display later in this issue. Turn to page 70 and head over to the kitchen.

Homemade Apple Cider
(Sans Apple Press)

As I was looking for an activity to entertain the kids while we took my much-needed fall break from homeschooling, my cousin mentioned something about making homemade apple cider without an apple press. This might seem like an arbitrary, new hobby for a forty-something, homeschooling, Arizonan mother of five to tackle, but I was up for the challenge. I told my fourteen-year-old son, who was supposed to be working on his essay on the Constitution, about my autumn beverage-making pursuit, and he pondered, "I always wondered how they get the juice from the apples. It's not like it's an orange that you can just squeeze."

"An astute observation, my son; put away that essay, let's find out how to do it," I announced, channeling my inner Ms. Frizzle. Equipped with a bit of instant internet expertise, we dove in.

My husband has observed that summers in Phoenix make one realize how very reasonable the beliefs of certain ancient peoples were, who held that the devil resides in the desert. So an October drop to double-digit temperatures (for the first time since May) provided the perfect excuse to celebrate with a grand, fall adventure, and let our (slightly) less overburdened air conditioner carry the delightful waft of cinnamon apples throughout our abode.

Now some readers may have an orchard right next door, but in the Southwest, we grow cacti. So, I procured my apples at our local grocery store. You, however, get extra points if you shop at a farmer's market or pluck the fruit from your own backyard tree. Cider experts recommend a variety of sweet apples. We are big fans of Honeycrisp in our home, but alas, they were not on sale. So, I went with a combination of Gala, Golden Delicious, and classic Red. For several hours, our home inhaled the aroma of real cider simmering on my counter. While every Thanksgiving we pour cider from a jug into our slow cooker, and enjoy the same cinnamon apple scents, but concocting this brew from scratch seemed more satisfyingly rugged — as though autumn itself had tipped its coonskin hat at my endeavor to authentically embrace the season.

Thanks to eager children repining over their long wait, I may have prematurely harvested our first batch. Learn from my mistakes, young Jedi — ignore your children's pleas, and let your cider simmer for a full eight hours. Nevertheless, my finicky flock enjoyed the blend we produced. As an added bonus, I threw the cooked apples and oranges into my blender to puree a subtly sweetened applesauce, which I served with dinner that night.

I don't use the word *hero* often, but after making my own apple cider sans an apple press, I think it's clear I am pretty much the most significant pomaceous folk-hero since Johnny Appleseed. And you can be sure, that as we gratefully bid adieu to summer heat in the desert Southwest, this resourceful mother will continue to search for new ways to harness the spirit of autumn using the internet, fall crops, and a little improvisation.

Recipe

No apple press? No problem. You can make homemade apple cider with a crock-pot and cheesecloth.

What you need

10-12 washed, cored, and sliced apples (remove blemishes and bruises)
2 peeled and sliced oranges
2 - 4 cinnamon sticks (depending on your spice preference)
1 teaspoon of cinnamon
2 teaspoons of cloves
1/4 cup - 1/2 cup of sugar (depending on how sweet you want your cider)
Purified water

What you do

1. Put all the ingredients into the crockpot.
2. Add water until it fills the pot and covers the contents.
3. Cover and simmer on low for 8 - 10 hours.
4. Strain out the chunks through a sieve into a large bowl or pot. To filter out even more pulp, pour strained juice through cheesecloth.

Serve hot with orange slices and fresh cinnamon sticks. Store remainder in glass bottles and refrigerate.

–Mrs. Becky Greene

Stick the Landing

Seven Suggestions for the Beginning Homesteader

Mr. Jason Craig

Many people are finding contentment in the rebellion of homesteading. It is rebellion because it dislodges us from so many machines. By homesteading we say "no" to being a cog in a wheel. Growing food gets you out of ridiculous tax systems and a consumer-based economy at the same time. It makes you a producer. The term economy, after all, means "household management", not "how much money we wasted consuming as consumers."

Here's a bit of my rebellion: I milk a cow.

Yes, every day I rebelliously bring milk from my cow to my family in one easy step. You laugh, but when you consider how long the journey from cow to table takes in today's industrialized system, you'll see how revolutionary I'm being. Typically, after milk leaves the cow, it goes to a milk hauler. The hauler takes it to a milk plant, which might ship it to another processing plant. The milk then goes to a distributor, then to a grocery store, and then finally to you. For better or worse, it is through complex supply chains like this that much of the world is fed.

> I rebelliously bring milk from my cow to my family in one easy step.

When such a chain of highly specialized dependencies works it works well enough, and can be efficient in a certain sense of the word. But when such a system fails it fails spectacularly. Consider the fact that during this pandemic, many already struggling dairy farmers were forced to dump oceans of milk into manure pits. This was because links later in the chain were unable to receive milk, and so trucks did not arrive to take it, but the cows didn't much care and went right on producing it.

We saw similar Covid-induced situations in the meat industry. The old-fashioned butcher shop has largely given way to new-fashioned meat processing plants, which efficiently slaughter tens of thousands of animals each day. When that suddenly stopped in April 2020, upstream agricultural communities were left trying to figure out what to do with tens of thousands of animals — each day. And, of course, through all this, consumers were left unable to find meat or milk on store shelves. Water water everywhere / Nor any drop to drink.

Even when things are not Corona-broken, downsides still exist. Milk loses quality as it is handled, which is why what you buy in the store tastes so different from fresh. Oh, and there are taxes, government fees, association fees (like the ones that fund the silly "Got Milk" campaign), not to mention a lot of people trying to skim some of the cream during milk's tortuous journey. The only person usually not making much money is the farmer. (Prices paid to farmers right now are about where they were in the 1970s.) Part of those fees and taxes mentioned above fund a government that pays farms not to grow food, and that has advocated for food producers to use more cheese while simultaneously warning consumers against eating too much of it. The system is smellier than Limburger. I don't propose to solve the world's food supply chain issues in this article, but, through my little homestead rebellion, I've fixed them for my family. You can fix them for yours, too. If everyone did the same, it would — well — fix the world's food supply chain issues.

Homesteading can also draw families together in an integrated work. To continue my example of the home dairy project, each family member works at it, benefits from it, and spends time together doing it. The kids and I milk and care for Abigail, our testy — but sweet — Jersey cow. My wife and my oldest daughter make cheese, butter, and so on, and we all enjoy what they make together! We also grow closer to other members of our community as we barter with and learn from one another and when we enlist friends to help our family whenever I have to travel for work (as I sometimes still do, with a Catholic mentoring organization called Fraternus).

Not everyone can raise cows, of course, but many of us can enjoy bucking immoral food systems while growing closer to our families, spending time in nature (a "book" that God wrote, as so many saints have put it), and doing a work that benefits more than just one's checkbook, retailers, or the tax collector. In short, it is good. Adam, after all, had a primordial vocation to tend

the garden. The garden was created good already by God, but tending and keeping it continues and extends God's creative power through our work. Cultivating the land is a uniquely blessed activity. No other creature has that dignity because only with man does God share his own dominion and creative power – he even lets us name the beasts!

We have grown a wide variety of plants and animals in our stumbling attempt at farming. We have seen and talked to people coming and going in this wild world of agrarianism. I can safely say that I have experienced more mistakes than successes, but I've certainly learned a lot through them. As I've heard it said, failure is compost . . if you know what to do with it. So, with my failures and experience in mind, here are seven tips for those of you just getting started in homesteading:

1. Find mentors.

Don't spend a bunch of time looking at websites and magazines like "Mother Earth News" – they're selling advertising, not worthwhile information. It's sort of like those magazines in the grocery aisle that have an article about "best lovin' ever" every single month. The wannabe farmer magazines just print pictures of unrealistic and pretty gardens and rolling pastures and say basically the same stuff over and over, just as Cosmopolitan says the same thing over and over again with pretty and unrealistic pictures. Don't window shop and compare yourself to impossible ideals. Go find someone to learn from! You'll learn more from driving a couple hours away and spending a day walking around a homestead or farm, than you will by staying up too late googling. Overdoing the "research" part of homesteading can become a paradoxical addiction, where you spend more time inside behind screens reading about being outside than you do outside in front of reality. Visiting a working homestead might also make you realize that you don't want to homestead – and that's just fine. You can find other ways to avoid consumerism and enjoy life.

2. Don't get weird about it.

Don't do a massive pendulum swing from Walmart shopper to Amish yeoman. Start slow. If you do, you will be less likely to get discouraged by failure or feel embarrassed when you give up and then see your friends at Walmart. Do it because it's good, not as a sheer reaction or to "prep" for disasters. It will also help if you simply tell your friends about your good homesteading experiences instead of describing the errors of the modern system they are part of. (Oops – is that how I started this article?) In short, just homestead for a while before grandstanding to the world. Homesteading is good, and that is reason enough.

3. Stick to the classics.

Don't grow exotic things. There is a reason every old picture of a farm includes chickens, cows, and pigs – these things produce food! If your goal is to raise enough food to actually feed your family, pigs and cows (dairy or beef) — not chickens — are your best bets. They supply abundant food for a family. The cost of raising chickens is actually very hard to justify. After feed and other expenses, you don't really fare any better than just buying eggs at the store. On the other hand, the act of caring for them is good, and they are useful for other aspects of the farm (see my next point). And, as chicken owners will tell you, chickens are extremely entertaining.

Sticking with the classics applies to vegetables as well. Your family can grow (and will likely enjoy) squash, tomatoes, beans, potatoes, and other classics much more than obscure and eccentric plants. These classics also tend to have varieties that are hardy and more forgiving. In sum, grow corn and pigs at first, not bok choy and llamas — no matter what Mother Earth News or the Farmers' Almanac (or Hearth & Field) said in their latest issue.

4. Think in whole systems.

Don't just picture your place with a cage here, a pen here, and a garden here. Think of how they all work together and how they can mutually benefit each other. Make your systems versatile and movable. Ask first what the land would like to do, not what you can force it to do. I have pigs under oak trees to eat the acorns next to the cows' barn where they can also drink spoiled milk or waste from dairying. Both of them are kept above a pasture and garden space, so that, when it rains, their nutrients flow into that area and fertilize it. I also use pigs to till my garden spaces and to clean out areas in general. On a smaller scale, you might consider having chickens or compost piles on top of future garden spaces

so that when you move them, you have more fertile ground to work with. In these early stages, books in the "permaculture" style of farming will be the most helpful.

5. Never have naked soil.

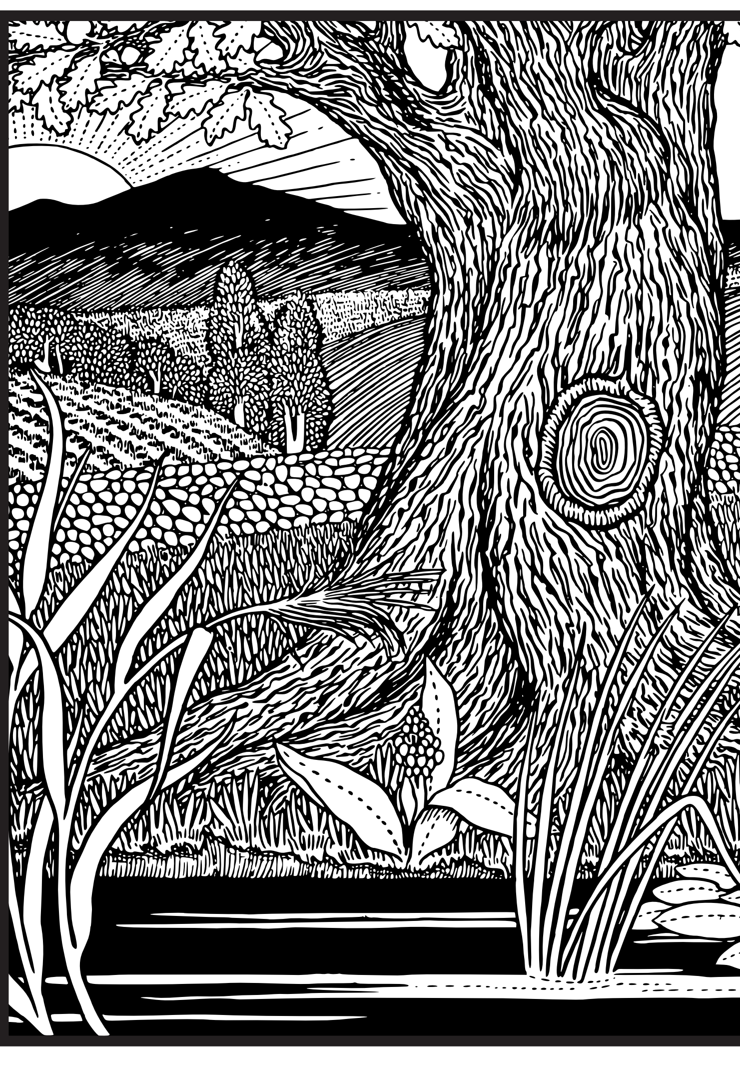
The number one mistake I see people make tilling up huge spaces on a warm Saturday before they really have a plan or enough experience gardening on a scale bigger than a pot. No really, this happens all the time. I use tilling and layering techniques that create better soil, less work, and more fertility. (It's not the only way, but it works very well). Nature never allows soil to be bare. Naked soil will wash away, compact, and lose fertility fast. That's why after you till, all sorts of new weeds pop up. They are trying to cover that naked ground fast, doing exactly what they were designed to do. There are no weeds in the forest where old leaves keep the floor mulched, but dormant weed seeds are there in case they are ever needed. Imitate the forest. Keep your ground covered in mulch or cover crops and only disturb it for really good reasons. I use cardboard and straw (not hay) as mulch, and then pile up manure and compost on top of that, then maybe some leaves, then more straw. I usually do this in the wintertime so that, come spring, the worms have "tilled" the soil, cardboard, and compost altogether and the weed seeds are eight inches underground instead of on top and ready to sprout when you water those new lettuce seeds. If you want a new garden space fast, put down a layer of cardboard and a load of compost and let it sit for a while, then work up small areas right where you are planting (leave the rest as mulch and future soil), then plant and mulch with straw.

6. Compost is not optional.

Whether you make compost or buy it, an investment in soil fertility is an investment that will actually pay you back. Don't overdo it with the seed catalogue and dream up an acre garden before you have the soil to support it. Also, don't buy ten flats of plants on a whim while you're running errands before the soil is prepared at home. Soil is a whole system in itself and has more going on than anything else on the farm, from bacteria to minerals – and your homestead needs as many things living and dying in there as possible. Soil is not just a support for the roots of plants, it is where your food begins.

7. Start.

I've wanted to have a small dairy for many years now. When I first moved to the country I hounded a mentor – "Teach me how to take care of cows!" He didn't know exactly what to tell me, but had clearly grown tired of the talk. "Just get a cow, Jason." So, I got a cow. I started. You don't have to go from couch potato to potato farmer to receive the blessings of homesteading. You can grow a tomato vine on the patio in a pot, but the simple act and experience will get you going in that direction. Even if your first tomato dies, you can always put it in the compost pile and start again! Hey, maybe you just don't like homesteading and you'll decide to try brewing beer at home instead – that's still human culture! If you go that route, come on over and we'll barter our goods and enjoy the fruits of the earth and the work of human hands—without being subject to the frailties of an overburdened supply chain or increasing the GDP.



'The Oak and the Reed'. Wood engraving by Percy J. Billinghurst. 1899.

Mr. Jason Craig works and writes from a small farm in rural North Carolina with his wife Katie and their seven children. He is the author of Leaving Boyhood Behind, the Senior Editor of Those Catholic Men and Sword & Spade magazine, and co-founder of Fraternus. He also hosts retreats for boys and men through St. Joseph's Farm. He is known to staunchly defend his family's claim to have invented bourbon.

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Making Sauerkraut with My Father

When people think of father-son time, they often think of fishing, hunting, or maybe building a shed, but most wouldn't think of making sauerkraut. Well, my father isn't like most, because that's exactly what he, my baby son, and I did recently. We pulled out the sauerkraut pounder, the cabbage shredder, and the pickling salt, and off to work we went. Dad held baby Joseph and guided me in the art of sauerkraut, inserting curious comments as we went. If you've harvested a prolific cabbage crop recently, this would be a good art for you to learn, too. Here is the tried and true method that he taught me.

After the sauerkraut was all prepared and Joseph was ready for a nap, Dad handed me the crock and smiled, "Now you'll be doing this all the time!" he proclaimed. As I carried the kraut to my car, I thought, "This was a sweet and sauer experience." Dad likes dumb jokes; he would be proud. And, honestly, I think he's right — I will be doing this all the time. I hope you will too.

–Mr. Nathan Runde

Some Kraut Wisdom from Dad

"You want everything you use to make sauerkraut to be clean."

"Most people take out the core of the cabbage, I leave it because it tastes great. Plus, it makes a nice crunchy snack when you're making sauerkraut and when you're checking it."

"I love going downstairs and stealing pieces of sauerkraut while I check on it."

"A lot of old-timers don't even measure how much salt they put on, they just sprinkle some on and call it good. Just don't put too much."

"A friend of mine told me that his grandpa's father made him drink sauerkraut juice every day during the Flu of 1918 to stay healthy."

"If you forget about your sauerkraut and it starts to smell bad, it's best to just throw it out."

"No metal should touch your brine or sauerkraut; it messes up the fermentation."

"Watch your fingers on the cabbage slicer. Every time I've made sauerkraut with Jim, he's cut himself."

Recipe

What you need

1 Large head of fresh cabbage (four to five pounds)
1 Tablespoon of pickling or canning salt

A large mixing bowl
A clean five-gallon bucket
A pickling crock or two-quart Mason Jar
Sauerkraut pounder (I use a cut-off handle from an old pitch fork.)
For the crock: A plate or lid that fits inside without a lot room around the edges. This holds the sauerkraut below the brine.
For the gallon jar: A standard bread bag, washed clean and filled with water, also to hold the sauerkraut beneath the brine
A sharp knife
Optional: A cabbage shredder

What you do

1. Shred: Remove the brown outer leaves of your cabbage and quarter it around the core. Shred the cabbage into the bowl, one quarter at a time, pressing lightly to make fine strips. You can also cut the cabbage with your knife, though this takes longer.

2. Salt: Sprinkle ½ tablespoon of salt on top of the shredded cabbage. Using your hands, pull a few handfuls of cabbage from the bottom of the bowl and set them on top. Sprinkle the rest of the salt on this. Let the salted cabbage sit for about ten minutes. This will allow the salt to begin pulling water from the cabbage, forming a brine.

3. Pound: Move the salted cabbage into the clean five-gallon bucket. Then use your sauerkraut pounder to press down on the cabbage until a thin layer of brine covers all of the cabbage. This will take two or three minutes of pressing hard.

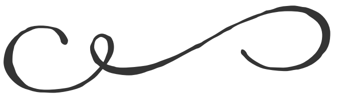
4. Transfer: Move the salted cabbage into the crock or jar with your hands. Be sure to pour in all the juice that has been squeezed out in the bucket. Press the cabbage down with your sauerkraut pounder so that it is below the surface of the brine.

5. Cover: If you are using a crock, place the lid or plate on top of the cabbage so that it keeps all the cabbage below the surface of the brine. Weigh this down with two glass jars. If you are putting your sauerkraut in a jar, fill the bread bag with water, and set this on top of the cabbage. This will form a water seal so that no sauerkraut can float up, and it will protect the sauerkraut from mold.

6. Ferment: Take your crock of cabbage to a place between sixty and seventy degrees; a basement is normally a good spot. Below sixty degrees, the fermenting process will go much slower; over seventy degrees, the sauerkraut could become mushy. Cover the crock or jar with a towel to prevent dust and spiders from sneaking in, and then let it sit. The length of time the fermenting process requires varies, but it normally takes about three weeks to complete. The best way to know if your sauerkraut is done is to steal a few nibbles every couple days. Once you like how it tastes, it's done! Check your sauerkraut every day when it's fermenting. Sometimes mold or yeast can form on the top. If you see this, scoop it off. The sauerkraut underneath should be fine. You should throw away your batch if: the mold gets into the sauerkraut itself, the mold is pink or orange, the sauerkraut is mushy or slimy, or if the sauerkraut reeks.

7. Eat and Store: After the fermentation process, the sauerkraut will be ready to eat! Put it in some jars with lids, and move it to the fridge. It can be stored in the fridge for many months. You can also can your sauerkraut.

The Art of Being Human *in a* *Culture of Noise*



Mr. Jimmy Mitchell

None of us will quickly forget what it felt like as churches closed, the economy shut down, and entire countries went into self-quarantine amidst the initial outbreak of the coronavirus. Such drastic measures had never been seen before in human history, especially on such a large scale. Only a combination of relatively recent medical discoveries (such as germ theory in the 19th century) and technological advances (such as air travel in the 20th century and smartphones in the 21st) made such a response even possible. We stood by as countless debates ensued about the virus' effect on national health systems, local economies, and global politics. We wondered how close the virus would hit home as we avoided vulnerable loved ones and prayed for those who were dying alone in hospitals. We hoped beyond hope for a speedy vaccine, purchased masks in the meantime, and watched as social distancing became the hallmark of compassionate civic engagement.

But rare was the thoughtful debate about the virus' implications on faith and culture. It certainly affected our personal prayer lives as we live-streamed church on Sundays. It affected our sense of community as we set up family trivia nights, Bible studies, and even happy hours behind screens. But what did it mean for human history that churches were closed on Easter Sunday for the first time in 1700 years? What did it mean for human culture that families were forced into isolation, religious institutions were deemed unessential, and online industries like pornography and social media were given full reign to breed one addict after another?

As of late, I've asked myself what it means to be American more than in any other period of my life. I love this country and especially my hometown of Nashville, but I'm more skeptical than ever of medical experts, elected politicians, and Hollywood elites. How can there be so much disagreement and discord? What principles even unite us as a country? Who can be trusted to lead us through the next crisis when self-contradiction and egomania rule the day?

And yet, a far more important question has been surfacing in my heart as well: what does it mean to be human? What unites us across the human experience and makes life worth living? When everything is on the line, even when time seems to stop and the whole world sinks into anxiety, what does it mean to be fully human and fully alive? And what role does the Church play in offering the world a way of life that builds a better culture and transforms people from the inside out?

— Adapted from Mr. Mitchell's forthcoming book *Let Beauty Speak* —

When everything is on the line, even when time seems to stop and the whole world sinks into anxiety, what does it mean to be fully human and fully alive?

One problem is that we're living in a time that rarely asks big questions. It took a pandemic for many people to slow down long enough to ask where their lives were going, what their lives were about, and how they could make a difference in the world.

The greater problem is that we've all grown up in a culture of relativism that rarely moves beyond saying, "You have your truth, and I have mine." We've all heard these words spoken by family and friends. They deny objective truth and end all debates before they can even begin. They've invaded higher education and mainstream media. They've replaced moral norms with political correctness. They've fostered fierce individualism and left an entire generation existentially orphaned.

This culture of relativism has given way to a culture of noise that fills our everyday lives with endless distractions. On average, we check our phones once every twelve minutes. We scroll our screens long enough to cover the distance to the top of Mount Everest and back every year. We passively contribute to the half a billion tweets that go out every day across the world and the billion hours of video consumed on YouTube. Don't get me wrong. These platforms are morally neutral, and they can be used for great evil or great good. But the noise they cause is pervasive, leaving our culture of relativism largely unquestioned.

Meanwhile, our hearts are filled with quiet desperation. We've grown numb to our infinite desire for God. And our culture is sinking into despair.

Throughout most of college, I tried to win people over to my faith by living a morally upright life and winning theological debates whenever possible. I penned friends in the corners of coffee shops, doing whatever it took to convince them that I was right and they were wrong. I often tried to convince them with charm and persuasion, but I quickly turned them into

intellectual projects and hijacked their humanity (and mine) along the way.

After several years as a frustrated evangelist, I began praying and fasting. I studied history and philosophy. I looked to the lives of great saints and reformers to see how they won souls and spearheaded entire movements of renewal in the life of the Church. Over the course of several months, I noticed a consistent thread: great evangelists never took their eyes off of beauty. They fixed their gaze constantly upon the Beautiful One who gave them their identity every day in prayer. They surrendered constantly to God's loving providence and allowed Him to orchestrate a beautiful masterpiece with their lives. Their relationship with the Lord wasn't a transaction. It was a romance. They saw Him in the beauty of Creation as effortlessly as they revealed Him in the beauty of their lives. They deeply believed that personal renewal was the only way to cultural renewal.

It's time to bring the beauty of God's love to the forefront of your life and intentionally cultivate the art of being human.

Why, then, does beauty matter so deeply in our times? Great philosophers and theologians have always described the transcendentals of beauty, truth, and goodness as overarching realities that point to the meaning of human existence and ultimately to God. In today's world, relativism has overshadowed the pursuit of truth and goodness, convincing us that it's intolerant to propose anything absolute. This fear of objectivity and its demands eliminates the possibility of intellectual discourse (truth) and moral standards (goodness). To disagree with the high priests of mainstream media and higher education is a hate crime. To engage with traditional morality is backward and bigoted.

And, yet, there is no enemy of beauty. In an era marked by rampant relativism and noise, beauty is the last-standing transcendental. Nobody argues with the beauty of a blood orange sunset, a towering mountain range, a newborn child, or an ancient church. Nobody argues with the humble witness of Mother Teresa or the joyful wit of G.K. Chesterton. Without being able to put it into words, everyone is open to the encounter with God through beauty. When we let beauty speak, it breaks through the noise and brings truth and goodness along with it.

So what can beauty teach us about living intentionally and changing the world? How does it reveal what is good and worthy of our love? How can it help the Church evangelize the world yet again? While beauty speaks poignantly through good music, books, and art, it speaks most powerfully through the lives of everyday Christians who know their dignity, live with heroic virtue, and remind the world what it means to be human. You don't have to be a philosopher or theologian to live beautifully. You just have to be courageous enough to hunger for more than what this world has to offer.

In a world paralyzed by a pandemic and deeply confused about what it means to be human, it's time for great saints to rise up from the ashes. It's time to bring the beauty of God's love to the forefront of your life and intentionally cultivate the art of being human. When you do so, you not only break through the noise. You become a remedy for the isolation, confusion, and meaninglessness of our times.

Believing deeply in the power of beauty to change the world, Mr. Mitchell's gifts of storytelling and piano-playing bring him to every corner of the world. From summer camps and corporate retreats to large-scale conferences, his greatest joy is helping others fall in love with God. He's the host of Love Good's popular weekly podcast, the composer of film scores for countless movies that don't exist, and a huge fan of old books. Whether he's on stage at a youth conference in New Zealand or interviewing a GRAMMY award-winning artist in his studio, Jimmy loves nothing more than encountering the beauty of God's love in the hearts of young people and artists.

'A Section of the Via Sacra, Rome (The Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian)' by Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg. Circa 1814.

Duck

(The Other Dark, White Meat)

One of the greatest predictors of our nation's faith in the economy is the rate at which we buy chickens. Ever since the 1920s, the sale of chicks, fertilized eggs, and chicken raising products for both home and farm has risen dramatically during times of economic crisis. This fascinating and well-studied fact speaks both to our pioneering roots and to our familiarity with America's favorite poultry. There is, however, another option when it comes to raising your own birds for meat, eggs, or both. Meet the humble duck.

'Duck, Hung on a Wall, and a Seville Orange'. Jean Baptiste-Simeon-Chardin. 1720-1730.

While preferred in many European and Asian countries, the duck has never been able to fully capture the imagination of the American food psyche. Even though certain varieties can compete in terms of sheer production with any chicken, many Americans have not considered duck ownership as part of their homesteading, farming, or suburban food security strategy. Ducks should be a staple of any homestead or backyard food plan. Their eggs are bigger and richer, and their meat more flavorful, than that of chickens. And centuries of hunting wild ducks have led to incredible recipes that carefully use nearly the entire bird. Not to mention the luxurious down feathers that can fill your quilts and pillows.

To raise ducks, you need a similar set-up as the one used for raising chickens. Access to fresh water, food/forage, and a safe place to rest at night. Additionally, ducks need a small pond or somewhere they can fully submerge their heads. They also need relatively soft ground as their webbed feet are more delicate, and they like to dig under the ground in search of bugs. Fencing can be shorter than chicken fencing, as the ducks typically stay put, unless you give them a reason to leave.

Common Varieties

Egg-laying varieties, like Khaki Campbells, are amazing foragers and prolific layers—well over three hundred eggs per year. There is the added bonus that they nearly always lay early morning, meaning that if they are locked in a shelter you don't have to search for eggs. They mature relatively quickly and will begin laying between five and seven months. Given enough space to forage and run, a small flock of Campbell's can provide plenty of eggs for a typical family. Do not expect them to brood or raise their own ducklings as they are notoriously bad mothers. While Campbells are remarkably adaptable and do well throughout the various climates of North America, several other varieties of egg layers are commercially available to any homesteader or suburbanite with patient neighbors (like chickens, ducks can be loud).

Meat ducks can provide over eight pounds of meat per bird and grow to weight within two months! They also have a higher fat content, and a darker meat, because they use breast muscles more than domesticated chickens or turkeys. Pekins which came to the US in 1873 from China were crossbred with another large, fast-growing duck, the Aylesbury. The result was the American Pekin which today is grown commercially for both eggs and meat. Other slightly smaller varieties like the Rouen are well-known for their amazing meat and fat which can be rendered, stored and used throughout the year.

The Ultimate Backyard Poultry

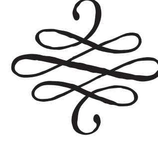
A small flock of ducks can be a joy to raise. They are, frankly, more endearing than chickens. While young children often run away from little, carnivorous, dinosaur-like chickens, they tend to run towards fat, waddling ducks. Ducks herd together and run hilarious lines when chased, and kids will have fun trying to find where the ducks hid their latest clutch. Ducks also seem to cuddle when held close.

Duck eggs are excellent for baking. Both Pekins and Campbell's produce more eggs on average than chickens, and when slaughtered they typically dress out about twice the size. Also, the culinarily adventurous will be able to use more of the bird, given the plethora of amazing recipes for the neck, liver, and blood.

Whether for eggs, meat, or insect control (did we mention that ducks eat all the same bad bugs as chickens, plus they eat slugs and snails, all without scratching?), ducks are the ultimate backyard poultry. The only drawbacks are that they typically need more space than chickens, they need water to wash in, and they are more prone to predation. With that said I once saw our four-pound Runner duck take on a red fox and save a Pekin that was clutched in its mouth. Consider adding some ducks and enjoy the other dark, white meat.

A Return to Normalcy

Parents as Primary Educators



Dr. Ryan Hanning

This past March, the American education system underwent its most significant transition since World War II. As Spring came, the pandemic forced all education, public, private, lower, and higher to a temporary halt. It has also revealed several truths about education in general and the strengths and weaknesses of the American education system. As schools pivoted and transitioned as best they could to online, remote, and hybrid modes of education, parents attempted to adjust to the new normal. Unlike other abnormalities brought on by the pandemic, the transition to the home being the place of education was actually a return to normalcy, albeit an uncomfortable one for many. With the exception of those who already homeschooled, most parents took on a role that, while inherently belonging to them, is typically not emphasized.

Study after study demonstrates that children learn the most enduring lessons of life from their home, parents, and surrounding family. Despite strong evidence that parental involvement in their children's education is a decisive factor for success, most parents underestimate their role as primary educators. The answers to questions of origin, purpose, destiny, forgiveness, self-worth, etc. may be reinforced in the classroom, but they take root in the home. With parents considering their options this fall, and in light of the momentary reminder of the home as a place of education, as well the limits of our modern education system, it's worth reviewing the important role parents play in their children's education and how this plays out in the various educational settings they choose for their children.

Parents Matter

The emerging collection of anecdotal and peer-reviewed studies focused on student participation and achievement reveals one consistent truth: parents matter. Children whose parents are more involved in their education have better attendance, higher grades, and above-average graduation rates. This type of correlation is to be expected. It only follows reason that parents who are more involved in their children's education are more likely to seek out better schools, ensure participation, help with homework, etc. Like all correlatives, it does not prove causation. But while there are many factors to a child's success in school, these studies do reveal a deep truth about the instrumental role parents play, a role that is often acknowledged but less often seriously engaged by modern education.

In the stripped away schooling of this past year, students without parental intervention were left to their own devices, figuratively and literally. The current crisis and the response in Spring 2020, more fully exposed the significant equity gap for lower-income families. Many of these studies confirm that students from lower-income families are less likely to have two parents at home and less likely to have access to the internet and the devices that remote education depends on — but this is only part of the story. Students of lower-income families whose parents took an active role as primary educators fared much better overall. This includes single-parent homes, which now make up twenty-five percent of households of school-aged children in the US (the highest rate in the world). They more successfully advocated for the resources they needed, and often overcame any gaps by taking the onus of education upon themselves. At the same time, these studies indicate that, while more affluent families with greater access to resources did not suffer in the same way, there were similar losses in retention and performance among affluent students whose parents outsource their role as primary educators rather than embrace it.

Four Golden Calves

As the principal author of one of these studies (The Impact of Coronavirus on K-12 School Attendance, Performance and Culture, San Juan Diego Institute, May 18th, 2020), I find this correlative between parent involvement and student achievement illustrative of the deeper challenges our current educational system faces. It also provides a context in which to create more equitable and effective models of education. For far too long, parents have outsourced the education of their children in ways that damage, rather than build up, their role as primary educators. This has been to our detriment, and we continue to see the failures of our current system exposed, especially during this time of crisis. The modern education construct is based on

some failed assumptions of social engineering and pragmatism. Many parents experienced these first-hand as they were confronted with trying to manage, replicate, or intervene with the many misguided norms of modern education while educating their children at home. These failed assumptions include several golden calves that have deserved smelting for some time.

1st Idol:
Pre-eminence of Pragmatic and Technical Knowledge

The first idol is the pre-eminent focus on pragmatic and technical knowledge. For most of the history of western civilization, education was built upon the foundations of knowing how to think and communicate. This was the basis of self-discovery and personal development as well as civil dialogue and civic duty. The idea was that the subjects of grammar, logic, and rhetoric were the basis for reading, writing, speaking, and thinking rationally, which were necessary for more advanced subjects of math, music, astronomy, etc. This approach was represented in the classical trivium and quadrivium model which undergirded nearly all educational systems in the western world. Even those systems not linked to our Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian heritage, followed similar courses of thought. To be educated meant to know who one was, and how one was called to live in this world. How different western perspectives are today, when to be educated means to be good at something and / or employable. Having skills and being employable are very important, but they are insufficient to provide a vision for the whole of education, or the whole of life. In other words, education focused on purely practical, efficient, or economic ends, can too easily forget the important foundations upon which all good work is founded.

Sadly, this focus invades private and home education as well, where the human foundation of education, the formation of the moral imagination, and the development of virtue can be sidelined by a pressure to compete with public schools. In the words of one of my former student's fathers, "I am happy that he got a good grade, but is my son any less of a jerk after your class?" The humorous question was an honest one. You have given them more knowledge, but have you directed them towards what is good, beautiful, and true? While it might not be my job as a teacher to prevent his son from becoming a villain, I certainly shouldn't add to the problem. In this regard, the shortcomings of the modern education system are perhaps best summarized by C.S. Lewis' Abolition of Man, Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English which opens with the darkly humorous stanza, "We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful." If you prefer a slightly more modern, cinematographic allusion, in the movie Jurassic Park, Dr. Ian Malcom (played by Jeff Goldblum) accuses the creators of the park of forgetting the dangers of technical ability bereft of reason and humanity when he tells them, "Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should."

As primary educators, we must provide a foundation for our children built upon an adequate understanding of their dignity. They were created for

something more than just to do some thing or to have a high-paying job. We must help them answer the fundamental questions of life — their origin, purpose, destiny — and inspire them to seek virtue and meaning in life, to be willing to ask the questions of "why" not just the utilitarian question of "how." We must demand that those we trust to educate our children see the value in that foundation. This is not a particularly religious proposition. Much of what is good, beautiful, and true of humanity is part of our universal heritage as humans. Common decency, basic objective morality of good and bad behavior, and the consequences of such actions are important life lessons for both the physical and emotional life of the child. In private, religious schools, we should teach, inspire, and hold students accountable to moral behavior becoming of who they are called to be. In public or charter schools, we should teach them the civic morals of integrity, civility, justice, cooperation, and the common good.

2nd Idol:
Overemphasis on Materialism and Empiricism

The second idol of modern education is related to the first: an overemphasis on materialism and empiricism. While the study of the material world is indeed the rightful domain of the sciences, not everything is material. Our thoughts, our hopes, our ambitions —those things that are so human that we rarely actually think of them — are also the domain of education. Science, properly understood, is the study of observable, repeatable, material phenomena. It is an excellent way to learn about the physical world, but it is not the only way to learn about truth.

Most of the college students I have taught suffer from a type of anxiety that comes from being told their entire life that people can know everything about the material world, but nothing about the immaterial world. Things like purpose, destiny, happiness, love, meaning, or fulfillment either remain a mystery or are insufficiently explained by some physical phenomenon. Working for years at a large public research institution, I heard all the proposed materialist explanations. Often, they play out like this:

Materialist: "'Love' is merely a stimulus-response to endorphins in the brain that have been meticulously conscripted by eons of natural selection by which people with more developed pituitary glands had higher procreation and reproductive rates due to an associated willingness to form interpersonal relationships with successive partners."

Anxious College Student: "Dude, I just wanted to know if I should ask her to the dance."

All this is to say, that the current preference for the inductive methods of reasoning, the focus on technique, and interaction with the physical world, does not simultaneously equip us for the deeper and more important questions of life. I tell all my freshman students that if, after four years of college, they leave with a deep knowledge in their degree field, but know nothing more than when they started about who they are, what fills their heart with joy and breaks it with sadness, and nothing more about how to make a gift of themselves to others, they will have failed. The same is true for every grade and every age.

As primary educators, we must show our children that the world in all of its goodness is more than just the sum of its parts. We must inspire humility, awe and wonder, and appreciation and stewardship of the natural world. As parents, our children should know that we are as excited for them to discover their mission in life as they are. An educational system that overly relies on empiricism is more likely to treat our children as problems to be solved, not as learners to be accompanied towards truth. Its focus becomes how to more efficiently deliver the content, or teach the skill. This, while important, cannot outweigh the veracity and meaning of what they are being taught. We live in a technological world, and skills and technique matter, but are exercised well to the extent to which the people that use them have the ability to guide their use towards what is really good, beautiful, and true.

As parents, our children should know that we are as excited for them to discover their mission in life as they are.

3rd Idol: Superiority of National and Federal Norms

The third idol is the idea that national and federal norms represent and/or exceed the regional realities, economic and otherwise, of a local place. Certainly, as discussed in the previous paragraphs, there are basic human norms that every person needs as well as basic knowledge that all citizens must have to support a constitutional democracy, but to federalize the bulk of education on the precept that everyone needs the same thing, or —even worse— to defend the practice of violating subsidiarity under the pretext of making sure no one is left out, is unbecoming of a nation whose motto is e pluribus unam.

Despite the best of intentions, federal norms often leave more children behind and less equipped to meet the actual realities of the places in which they grow-up and, God-willing, will continue to live, work and raise families. The goal should not be for children of pig-farmers in Iowa to know all the same things as the children of stock traders in New York. Chances are, kids in Manhattan may be offended by a field trip to the slaughterhouse, and kids in Des Moines may not be served well by a day at Wall Street. If such a thing were beneficial to these children, their parents can provide the opportunity. It should not fall on our broken educational system to make universal decisions in place of what competent local authorities can decide. It is naive to believe that children are better off if they all know the same stuff, especially if that stuff is not determined by human nature, but instead by shifting economic and political realities. Our society has rejected the perennial teaching of the trivium and quadrivium as nostalgic, inefficient, and outdated, yet builds a standardized educational system on fluid and changing social norms.

As primary educators, you are right to ask what is valuable to all people, to all citizens, as well as particular to your family, your region, your state. What things ought your children learn that will make them a better member of your community? As the primary educator, you are constantly asking what your child needs, and what things will matter for them when they come to more fully realize their ambitions. As your partner in education, the school, the curriculum, etc. should speak to these needs. You are well within your right to advocate for them. Your taxes provide these services., Your elected officials, or their delegates, are meant to serve the people they represent.

4th Idol: Bureaucratic Decisions

The final golden calf is a body of bureaucratic decisions we often hide behind that are supposedly made for the benefit of the child. The fact is, many of the decisions that our society has made and continues to make about how our schools educate, have been made for economic, and not educational, considerations. While most of these decisions are not necessarily bad for our society, we cannot say in good conscience that they are genuinely good for our children. The younger starting age for schooling, for example, may account for better test-taking skills in later years, but the decision to educate children earlier was based largely on an economic system that necessitates two working parents, not on a real dilemma in test-taking ability. A three-and-a-half-year old is likely better off at home with his or her parents, than in a class of strangers. The same reasoning was followed regarding the length of day, all day preschool, co-ed classes, etc. In fact, much of the educational research that attempts to justify these things simply points to gains within the educational system itself, not to benefits experienced by children. Meanwhile, other data shows the real cost to students and families. The same is true for programs that are applied to all children equally so as not to discriminate against those who do not need it.

A clear example of this type of thinking was a summer food program in Phoenix. It is noble, good, and just that schools that ensure the nutritional health of children during the school year should continue to do so during the summer. But one Phoenix school district decided that, in order to not require needy students to sign up for the program, they would continue to offer free food service throughout the summer to all students. The net result was that the local elementary school fed affluent families and threw away what they could not send home with staff. This type of waste whether it be of food, books, devices, or services, is rampant. It does not help our children, and it further directs resources away from those who need it most. Let's face it, it is okay to make prudent decisions that may negatively affect our children for the purpose of some greater good; it is not okay to pretend we are making these decisions on their behalf.

As an educator, and as one who continues to teach educators, I can attest to the truth that good teachers suffer from these fallacies as much as their students. Many teachers succeed at educating our children despite the environment created by the edu-crats who pursue a never-realized utopia, forever dependent on just a little more power and a little more funding. These challenges are not the fault of the teacher, but rather that of a system that has combined well-funded good intentions with bad anthropology.

Despite the failings of our current system, these false idols are vehemently defended. We struggle to imagine what the alternative might look like. It is indeed hard to imagine. Parents often feel that they cannot and should not attempt to compete with what is provided by the "expert" in the classroom, but fail to recognize that well-ordered classrooms simply mimic what families naturally provide on their own: a structure for cooperation, communication, and learning. To be clear, all forms of organized schooling (public, charter, private, and homeschool) have distinctive benefits, but these benefits do not need to come at the expense of usurping the parents' role as primary educators. One of the central findings of our study was that schools that take seriously their partnership with parents, and that honor parents as the primary educator of their children, performed better overall. Good teachers know this, and they succeed precisely because of their willingness to serve as paternal (or more often than not) maternal partners, not surrogates, but real partners — representing what the parent wants most for their children, which is not just to pass the class, but to also become more of who they are called to be. Many successful schools interact with parents in ways that inspire and empower them to serve as primary educators with greater skill and confidence. Many of these schools coincidently don't succumb to the extremes of the four challenges outlined above. They approach the enterprise of education and the families they serve with less hubris and more humility.

Ultimately, the data supports the axiom: children learn from their parents. Parents always want what is best for their children, even those who don't always know how to give their children what they need. After all, this truth is ancient. It is even biblical. Jesus asked the crowd, "Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake?" (Matt 7:9-10) Good parents want

what is best, and seek to provide the fundamental goods of food, water, shelter, and education for their children.

In today's world, most parents will not allow anyone — be it government, neighbors, or in-laws — to tell them how to provide the goods of food, water, and shelter for their children. Only in severe situations does the common good demand intervention. Much of our childrens' education, however, is determined not by parents, nor by teachers, nor even the common good, but by other, less fundamental, factors. And they are made by more remote and separate decision makers. These decision makers are not nameless men in black suits, sitting in smoke-filled rooms, hatching nefarious plots. Nevertheless, the well-intentioned guidance of 'experts' has slowly eroded parents' God-given and natural role in the rearing and educating of their own children. A return to normalcy is needed. The data demands it, and our children and families deserve it. Perhaps this is why forty percent of public school parents said that they lost confidence in the education system and were considering homeschooling in the fall of 2020.

What is the solution?

The family is the locus of our development. Our first steps, our first words, our first lessons are learned in the home. How we relate to others, build virtue, eat food, worship, play, forgive, and love are all learned for good or for naught in the home. Parents play a central, enduring, and irreplaceable role as the primary educators of their children. The way parents fulfill this role is a matter of prudence, but it is never passive, nor can it be abdicated to another. Our society must radically rethink how our school systems partner with and assist parents in this role, for the benefit of the child, the family, and the community. This crisis will have been wasted if it does not cause us to want more for our children, our families, and our nation.

As everyone seeks to fix the problems caused and exposed by the pandemic, governments, philanthropists, policymakers, and districts should be seeking to increase efforts to meaningfully support parents as primary educators. This will require some radical changes, and will challenge existing norms of the pragmatic paradigm that undergirds most modern education. Furthermore, parents should forcefully reclaim their rightful role. For some, this will mean more involvement in their public school to ensure that what their children are learning is consistent with the needs of the family and community. For others, it will mean partnering with their private school teachers and administrators to re-think how the school can engage, empower, and support the home as the locus of education. For others, it will mean taking home education more seriously, whether that be education delivered remotely to the home by others, or more traditional forms of homeschooling where the parent serves as the principal teacher. Regardless of how we decide to best school our children, this return to normalcy will mean reclaiming our children as our own, prayerfully discerning what they need, and once again becoming their first teachers.

Dr. Ryan Hanning

Dr. Hanning is a professor of theology and an editor of Hearth & Field. He writes on a range of topics including history, theology, ecology, and education, and is the co-author of *The Will Power Advantage*. Ryan and his wife Rebecca homestead in Whites Creek, Tennessee, where they raise flocculent sheep and irascible goats. They have ten, well-socialized, home-schooled children.

Ryan has also given new (actually old) meaning to the phrase, "the sharpest knife in the drawer," with his helpful primer about knife care — turn the page to have a look.

Illustration by Marguerite Davis. 1924.

"Hear, my child, your father's instruction,
and do not reject your mother's teaching;
for they are a fair garland for your head,
and pendants for your neck."

-Proverbs 1:8-9

Why Sharpen a Knife…

Certain tools possess primordial qualities. The simpler the tool the more visceral response it yields. When I give my son a hammer, an ax, or a saw it is as if the entire woods demand to become a cabin. They no longer see thick trunks and hanging boughs; they see posts and beams. Somehow, this creative impulse written into our DNA is triggered by the handling and use of these tools. This could be simple nostalgia. There is something beautiful about using the same human ingenuity in the very same way as did our ancestors in to the stone age. I would like to think that something deeper than nostalgia is happening. It is only natural that the creative impulse of the imago dei is animated by the use of tools. Afterall, our yearning to create is simultaneously met with an awareness of our finite limitations. We are not all powerful and cannot create without tools. We depend on them to fulfill our call to "cultivate and till" the earth. I propose that these tools speak deeply and immediately to our participative relationship with nature.

Perhaps this is why moral and ethical constructs guide our use of tools. Using a tool well and for its intended purpose to achieve its intended outcome is "good." As in, "hey son, good job using that hammer to fasten the fence board to the post." Versus, "hey son, bad job using that hammer to break Mom's flowerpot." We even project these moral values onto the tools themselves. We honor their excellence when they work well and curse their deficiency when they fail. We assign personal agency to them and give them names. Anyone who works in a trade knows that a tradesman's preferred tools have a type of primordial kinship with him. King Arthur's Excalibur, Thor's Mjölnir, Bilbo Baggin's Sting, Ryan's Linemans'. My boys know that if they lose the pliers I have had since I was 15, they take on a mythical, bordering superstitious, power to doom our current electrical project. All this to say, we want our tools to work well, and to help us achieve the outcomes that they were designed for. This requires respect, proper use and proper maintenance.

Knives hold a pride of place in the hierarchy of tools. Historically they demonstrate early man's mastery over cleaving rocks to hone an edge, and later the ability to forge metal into a myriad of combinations. Knives take on a cultural significance as well. I remember getting my first knife and the accompanying lecture of proper use, control, self-possession, and responsibility. This lesson has not been lost on my own children. In many ways, knives are the ultimate tool and the ultimate illustration of mankind's use of technology to subdue and participate with nature. There are many ways to sharpen a knife and equally worthy debates over proper sharpening techniques for specific blade designs and metals. Here we review the basics of getting an edge worthy of giving your knife a name and assigning it mythical powers.

…and a Bit about How

Sharpening removes material from the edge of the knife and sets the blade angle. Refining it to a narrower point thus making it sharper. Setting the angle on the blade edge determines both its sharpness and durability. 25° is ideal for hunting and pocketknives, 20° is great for kitchen cutlery, and 17° is the norm on expensive paring and fillet knives. Honing a knife does not remove material as much as it brings the edge back to center and removes small imperfections to keep it sharp along the whole edge.

There are many sharpeners on the market. Pull through models which have two overlapping wheels or rods in a "v" pattern of varying "grit." And whetstones ("whet" is old English for "sharpen") flat abrasive pads of varying designs and grit. Both are effective, as are a variety of electric belt and wheel sharpeners. In my experience to put an initial edge on a knife or repair a blunted edge, the whetstone is the way to go. For general maintenance and keeping an edge a pull through sharpener works very well.

Using pull through sharpeners

These easy to use sharpeners typically have at least two different "grits". A coarse one for roughing out the edge, and a smooth one for honing the edge.

Step 1: Gently place the heel of the knife blade (the part closest to the handle) in the coarse grit notch and smoothly pull back in one motion allowing the edge to glide through the sharpener from the heel to the tip. Repeat this several times with light pressure until the blade glides through with little resistance.

Step 2: Gently place the heel of the knife blade in the smoother grit notch and smoothly pull back in one motion allowing the edge to glide through the sharpener from the heel to the tip. Repeat this several times with gentle to no pressure until the blade glides through without resistance.

Step 3: Thoroughly clean the knife as fine bits of metal dust will be on the blade.

Step 4: Evaluate the sharpness of the blade. There are many ways to test the sharpness of the blade. Of course there is the traditional shave test which sacrifices some arm hair, as well as sliding the blade across your thumbnail to see if it sticks. These are tested but dangerous ways to evaluate the blade and are not recommended. It is far better to cut something that the knife would ordinarily be used for and evaluate its performance.

Using Whetstones

These sharpeners take a little more time to master but come in varying designs to make it easier on the user. They all use the basic principle of using rougher to smoother grits of abrasive to create, refine and polish an edge on a knife. Traditional whetstones are flat stones of varying grit but can include any form of sharpening stone including those made from ceramic or diamond. Most whetstones will lay flat and you move the knife across the surface. Other designs hold the knife stationary and the stone is moved across the blade. Some whetstones use water, others use oil, so be sure to read the manufacturer's recommendations.

Step 1: Evaluate your knife and set up the appropriate starting stone and angle. 70 grit can be used for re-profiling damaged or severely dull knives. 120-300 grit are generally a good starting point. Some kits use only one stone with two sides, others will have multiple stones.

Step 2: Wet your whetstone. Follow the manufacturer's instructions. Some stones are soaked in water for 10-15 minutes, others are sprayed with water, or lightly coated in oil.

Step 3: Select the angle you want for your blade. Some sharpening kits have tools to ensure that you keep the correct angle, others will rely on your steady hand.

Step 4a: If using a traditional flat whetstone place the knife on the stone at the appropriate blade angle and slice forward with constant and even pressure, moving the knife in an arc from heel to tip. Make a smooth sweeping arc covering the entire stone. Repeat this multiple times alternating sides of the knife each time. A thin layer of mud might gather on top. Leave it, that slurry helps lubricate the blade.

Step 4b: If using a sharpening kit that moves the stone over the blade, the same principles apply as above. Move the stone from the heel to the tip in a sweeping arch that is pulling towards the blade.

Step 5: Repeat these steps with finer grit stones, cleaning the blade each time, until your honing stone finishes the edge.

Step 6: Thoroughly clean the knife as fine bits of metal dust will be on the blade.

Step 7: Evaluate the sharpness of the blade.

Some Tips

Keep your knife sharp. The adage that a "dull knife is more dangerous than a sharp one," is true. With the acknowledged exception of knife fights, which we generally refrain from. Dull knives lead to slippage and over exertion which cause accidents.

Sharp is sharp enough. Do not over sharpen. A razor edge is not necessary for most applications, and on most knives, it will lead to premature dulling.

Use the right knife for the right job. Have reasonable expectations for your knife, and learn the value of different builds, designs, and blade materials.

Make your knife an heirloom. A knife can last for generations. Keep it clean, well sharpened, and oiled, as necessary. One of my prized possessions is a small knife that my father gifted to me along with a wild yarn about its origins from a South African diamond mine. After his passing, one of his close friends confirmed the story. I will proudly pass it on to my oldest son, along with a few additional tales of my own.

Make knife giving a rite of passage: Giving your son or daughter a knife is a sign of trust and a call to responsibility. Do not miss out on the moment. My children expect that our camping trips in or around their 8th or 9th birthday result in a fireside gift giving ceremony. One that includes giving them a knife, teaching them to use it, and expressing my pride and trust in their ability to use it wisely. They also get the warning that using it poorly will result in consequences including losing the knife, which is far better than losing a finger. My older children participate in the gift giving and affirm the readiness of their brother and sister and also pledge to help them learn to use this tool for its intended purposes and to advance their good and the good of the family.

Before you send letters to the editor (which is always encouraged) I recommend sharpening towards the blade (as if the blade is cutting the sharpener) because it folds the burr under as opposed to building the burr on the opposite edge. Others would disagree. But they are wrong and possibly ill-intended. (Just kidding.) There are pros and cons of both ways and even a popular middle ground saying that you should rub the knife back and forth. Either way, practice will make perfect and over time you will likely develop your own regimen to keep your knives in top shape.

Don't cut yourself.

–Dr. Ryan Hanning

Brewing Beer, Building Culture

Dr. Jared Staudt

With modern culture slipping into ever deeper decline, anyone would be justified by a feeling of discouragement at the prospects of renewal. Although it is difficult, though not impossible, to change large scale institutions and practices, culture can be formed in compelling ways in the home and in local communities. That is not a cop-out, but a recognition that culture arises precisely from shared convictions and practices, necessitating that we become creators of culture through our work and family life. Thinking of culture in this way places more prominence on our choices that involve many smaller opportunities, ones that are more within our sphere of influence. In fact, focusing on culture as our own daily way of life places more prominence on seemingly insignificant details.

Long before the rise of the mass state and the Industrial Revolution, beer provided one example of the importance of food and drink in shaping a community's culture. It was one of the most ordinary of cultural products that could be made by the average person in the home, prior to the advent of large breweries and international brewing conglomerates. The origin of brewing, in fact, takes us back to the very beginning of human civilization, helping push early communities in the Ancient Near East toward the domestication of barley. For instance, we have discovered stone beer troughs that are nearly 11,000 years old at Göbekli Tepe, a site used for ceremonial worship and feasting, predating permanent settlements in ancient Mesopotamia. As brewing developed in this region — a region that includes biblical Israel — it entailed soaking twice-baked barley loaves in tubs and allowing them to ferment naturally, with the help of honey and fruit. The resulting porridge-like mixture would be consumed with straws.

The brewing process as we know it was perfected by monks in Western Europe, taking up the Germanic process of soaking malted barley in heated water to make wort and boiling it while adding flavoring. Monasteries built the first large scale breweries in Europe, created and fine-tuned brewing equipment, and pioneered hops as the main additive to beer, finding it useful not only for its bitter taste, but as a preservative. Nonetheless, brewing was jealously guarded as a household privilege throughout the Middle Ages, with women taking up the task most frequently (at least until the formation of brewing guilds in the late Middle Ages). Beer was the most common drink in northern Europe throughout the Middle Ages, consumed by everyone, including — at a lesser strength — by children. It was seen as a safe, clean, nutritious, and healthful drink, given in monastic hospitality to the sick, the poor, and to pilgrims. St. Hildegard of Bingen summarized the view of the time in her work Causes and Cures: "Beer puts flesh on the bones and gives a lovely color to the face, on account of the strength and good juices of the grain. Water has a weakening effect. . . . Whether people are healthy or sick . . . they should drink wine or beer, not water."

The medieval view of drinking as health-promoting was coupled with the importance of festivity. With no conception of secularism, eating and drinking took on important roles within the public celebration of faith, alongside processions, music, and dancing. The community demonstrated its faith and pride in its own traditions by thanking God for the harvest and toasting to one another's good health and prosperity— an act of festivity that Josef Pieper described as the affirmation of the goodness of life. (See his work, In Tune with the World.) Here we see a healthy culture in action, with festivity expressing the primacy of relationships and the beauty of local traditions, and with special clothing, food, and drink testifying to the importance of the holiest days. This kind of communal rejoicing could only come, however, after prolonged periods of abstinence, with fasting from food and drink as a means of moderating excessive attachment and removing impediments to joyful celebration.

Secular culture imparts no such importance to the daily details of life. Eating is just eating. Drinking often becomes an escape from life, not an affirmation of it. Clothes and dancing seek to incite the passions, rather than honor local customs and feast days. Entertainment itself exists completely separate from any deeper meaning and purpose — "it's just entertaining," we say, without any thought to how it shapes us from within. This may indicate why large institutions seem to take precedence over daily habits — the large scale, cheap, fashionable, and utilitarian have captured the imagination and moved the center of gravity away from what sits right in front of us. Consumerism, for instance, not only creates passivity to trends, but it also removes us from the cultural vocations to become producers of the goods that shape our lives. It removes us from direct contact with nature, with the work necessary to make nature amenable to human consumption, and from the relationships that enter into work — passive to the exploitation that occurs in the production of goods today.

Culture needs reintegration; therefore, one must take ownership back for one's own actions and work, and see them as contributing to the good of the community. Brewing, with its ancient cultural roots, can provide one small example. Homebrewing, because it is a return to a central culture practice of the past, stands for more than simply a fun activity. It restores economics to the home, making it a place of production that enlivens it with the same forces that drew people together from time immemorial. Brewing gathers people together for work and for celebration, enabling a true re-fermentation of culture. The same could be said for the craft and microbrewing movements which in the last forty years has taken us from forty to four thousand breweries, creating enhanced craftsmanship and aesthetic appreciation as well as stimulating local economies and cultures through the creation of additional jobs and places to gather. Beer has returned to its rightful place as a locally produced commodity that can, when consumed properly, unite people in conversation and fellowship.

Beer cannot save culture on its own, to say the least. It does, however, provide a poignant image of how to return to a productive and festive culture. Putting beer in perspective as a work of culture, integrated within a sacramental view of life, makes it a fitting image for renewal. We can make things and use them as a means of honoring God, living in communion with others, promoting health and moderation, and creating a local economy. If beer can serve as a stimulant of culture, so can many other things. Focusing on beer could seem trite, but, in fact, it helps us to focus on the nature of culture, as the fashioning the goods of creation, and the way in which we can become its creators rather its passive consumers.

'Beer Tankards'. Vincent van Gogh. 1885.

Dr. R. Jared Staudt is the author of The Beer Option: Brewing a Catholic Culture Yesterday & Today (Angelico Press) and Restoring Humanity: Essays on the Evangelization of Culture (Divine Providence Press). He serves as Associate Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Archdiocese of Denver and as Visiting Associate Professor at the Augustine Institute.

Are you curious to know Jared's favorite beers? So were we. Find out on page 75.

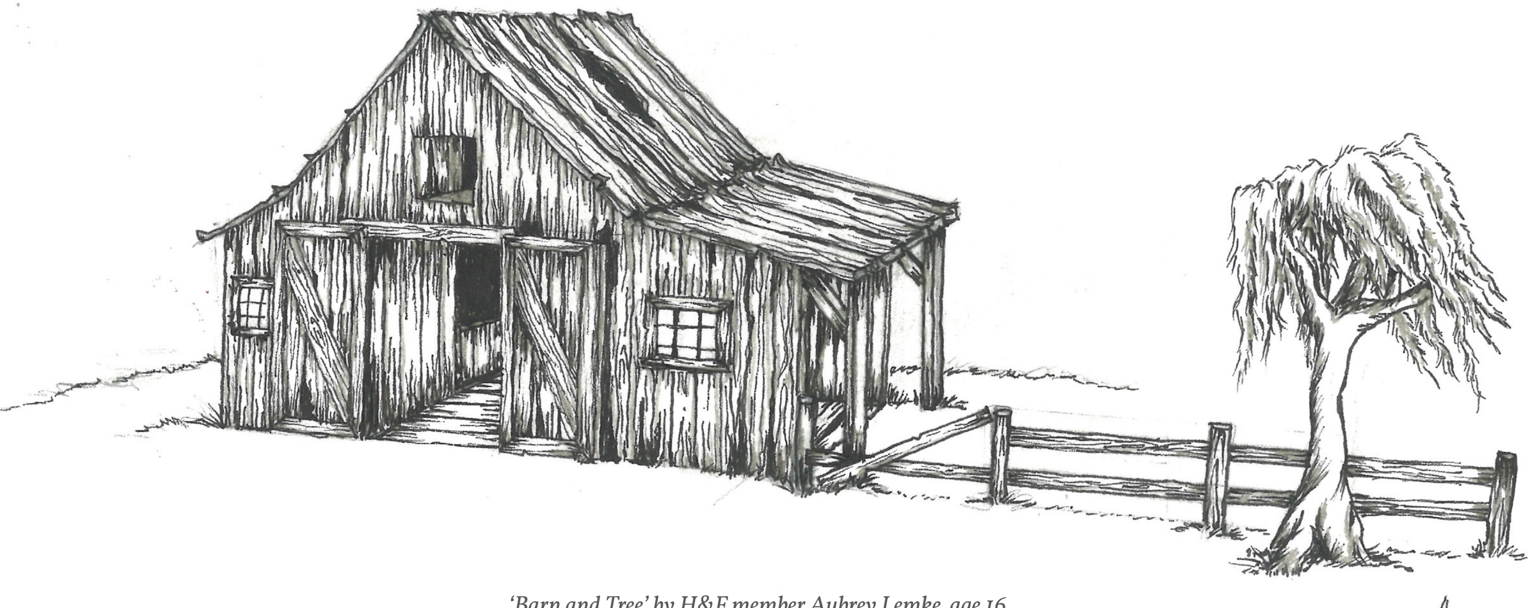
Autumn

The thistledown's flying, though the winds are all still,
On the green grass now lying, now mounting the hill,
The spring from the fountain now boils like a pot;
Through stones past the counting it bubbles red-hot.

The ground parched and cracked is like overbaked bread,
The greensward all wracked is, bents dried up and dead.
The fallow fields glitter like water indeed,
And gossamers twitter, flung from weed unto weed.

Hill-tops like hot iron glitter bright in the sun,
And the rivers we're eying burn to gold as they run;
Burning hot is the ground, liquid gold is the air;
Whoever looks round sees Eternity there.

-John Clare



'Barn and Tree' by H&F member Aubrey Lemke, age 16.

The Gourd that Keeps Giving

Squash are among the most easily grown and most satisfying staple of many backyard gardens. They adorn lattices and rooftops with their yellow and orange flowers and overtake well-tended beds with their sprawling vines and relatively large fruit. Cucumbers generously garnish summer salads, watermelons sweeten hot summer days, pumpkin pies quiet discordant family get-togethers at Thanksgiving, while butternut squash warms the soul on a cool winter day. Squash are sunk into the American food consciousness. Along with chiles,they are one of our native botanical treasures. Their sheer variety all but guarantees they will grow well into late fall and be enjoyed well into winter throughout the United States . Whether you have never planted squash before or are an avid cucurbitist, you will benefit from the tips below for growing, harvesting, and enjoying your squash year-round.

First, a little more about these plants. Cucurbita is the genus which includes squash, melons, cucumbers, and gourds in dozens of varieties. They are all broad growing vines that shoot out tendrils that climb or anchor themselves in the dirt, and they possess distinctive wide leaves which give way to both male and female flowers. The male flowers produce pollen from three stamens, which are frequented by bees and other pollinating insects. The female flowers produce the fruit, which, believe it or not, is a type of modified berry called a pepo which will eventually come to hang downward or rest on the ground.

Soil Conditions and Placement

Pick seeds or seedlings that are known to do well in your region. Plant them in a location where they will get full sun and can sprawl out several meters, depending on the variety. Or provide adequate climbing structures for the vine to climb. Note that all cucurbits can be trained to climb, but heavier fruited varieties are best left to grow on the ground. Cucurbits require well drained soil which is rich in organic matter. Till in compost, rotted manure (not the fresh stuff, which is too high in nitrogen, and, depending on your source of manure, may be high in ammonium, salts, or weed seeds). This will loosen and improve soil conditions. The plants will provide more fruit in soils with lower nitrogen and higher potassium, so testing your soil for these is a good idea.

If you end up with beautiful vines and small fruit, you likely have too high and nitrogen in your soil.

If you are planting from seed, make small mounds of dirt and plant two or three seeds into the soil one inch deep. In the early stages of growing, the plant needs plenty of water, but do not overwater because this encourages fungal diseases, which will stress the plant. A good rule of thumb, especially in the hotter months of summer, is to water in the morning and then the next day check to make sure the soil has not dried out completely. Once the plant emerges and gets its first true leaves, you can switch to watering every few days and eventually to the recommended deep watering once/week.

When to Plant

Summer squashes like zucchinis, yellow straightneck squash, and crookneck squash have thinner, more palatable skin than their winter cousins. Cucumbers come in either the slicing variety (which we all know and love) orthe pickling variety (which we also all know and love). Melons, like honeydew, cantaloupe, and watermelon and gourds like loofah are all planted in the spring a few weeks after the last frost, and harvested well before any fall frost.

Winter squashes like butternut, pumpkin, and acorn are harvested in autumn or early winter, but do not let the name fool you: these are warm weather plants. Winter refers to when they are enjoyed, not when they are grown. These varieties can take up to 110 days to mature, so plant them at the same time as the summer squashes, but expect to harvest them up until the first frost. Unlike their summer cousins, winter squashes have harder rinds and can store all winter without rotting or losing flavor.

When to Pick

As the fruit grows, make sure that any contact with the ground does not invite pests or rot. Elevate the fruit on some fresh hay, dry dirt, or even a plate or piece of wood. There are a thousand ways to tell if the fruit is ripe, but the most accurate is your direct experience with the plant and lots of trial and error. One plant may have a dozen fruit on it, all of which will ripen at slightly different times depending on when the fruit was pollinated and where it is in relation to roots, etc. In this case, size does not matter.

Some fruit may be large and too young for harvest, while other fruit on the same plant will be smaller but ready. Color, the texture of the rind, and the look of the top inch of vine on the fruit, can give you some pretty accurate information if you know what to look for. Also, keeping good records helps. Most seed packets will tell you approximate growing times and harvesting notes. If your seed variety is common in your region, these tips are usually very helpful.

When you harvest melons, gently lift them and twist them off the vine. Most melons are ready to eat from the moment they are picked, but patience can lead to sweeter fruit. few days of waiting won't hurt.

For squash, cut off the fruit about one inch above the stem. Summer squashes can be stored for about a week at room temperature, and a little longer in the fridge. Winter squashes can be stored in a cool dry place for up to three months. Storing the fruit hardens the rind and often enhances its flavor. For this reason, winter squashes are usually enjoyed after being allowed to mature off the vine for at least a little while.

For gourds, harvesting depends on the variety. Some gourds dry on the vine after it dies off. Other gourds are harvested and hung to dry.

Pest and Disease

Cucurbits are easy to grow and, once established, can provide a lot of food. They are susceptible to root issues (usually due to overwatering) and can suffer from mildew, which are diseases blown in from other infected crops. In cases of soil borne diseases, plant leaves will wilt, and fruit will rot with a distinctive slimy white mold. Mildew will cause lesions on the leaves, a powdery residue, and premature drying of the fruit on the stem. Mildew usually won't kill the plant completely, but it can lead to defoliation, which leaves the fruit more exposed to the elements. In both cases, healthy plants fare better. In addition to good soil and proper watering, good crop rotation and early removal of infected leaves and plants helps mitigate the risk.

Pests, like squash bugs and cucumber beetles, can be particularly damaging. The approach to dealing with them is one of management, not eradication. We follow and recommend a three-part strategy for dealing with pests:

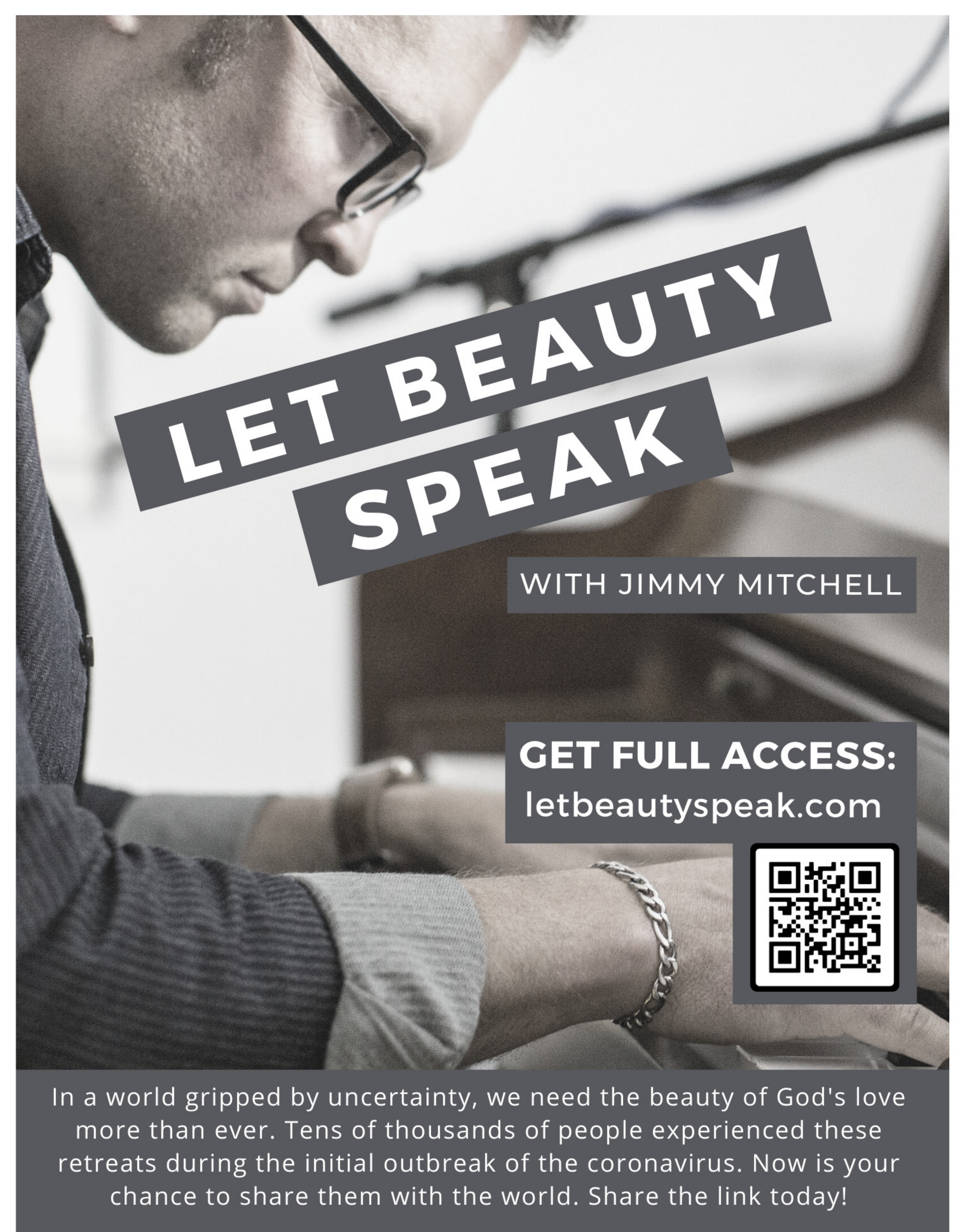
Search & Destroy. Find the adult bugs or beetles by thoroughly irrigating the garden which draws them to the surface. A water and dish soap solution kills pests on contact. Chickens and ducks also don't mind helping with this task, but must be carefully managed to ensure that their eager search for bugs doesn't destroy the plant.

Reduce Numbers. Search for squash bug eggs under the leaves and remove them with duct tape. Till up soil and remove mulch to let the winter kill off any cucumber beetle eggs laid in the soil.

Rotate crops. Move your crop of cucurbits each year. This type of plant rotation may be the best way to reduce pest damage.It often also has other benefits in terms of soil and plant health.

Conclusion

Presumably, we garden for its many benefits — the therapeutic benefits of being outside, getting your hands dirty, and, yes, getting the cold hard fist of nature right in the face when we do things poorly. It is as if God loves to teach us his immutable ways in the garden. But, more than anything, we garden to grow food to eat and enjoy. Cucurbits, by the sheer weight of produce they create are an incredible asset to gardens, large and small. It is not unreasonable to expect hundreds of pounds of pumpkins, watermelons, butternut squash, spaghetti squash and zucchini from a humble, well-managed garden. All of those are easily prepared and nutritious, full of electrolytes, vitamin C, vitamin B1, etc. Some brown sugar, butter, and vanilla generously spread over a butternut squash baked for forty minutes in the oven yields something that can make grown men cry. Last year, we fed our entire family of twelve on one banana squash that was two feet long and weighed in at well over thirty pounds. So, if you haven't considered adding the fun-to-say and great-to-eat cucurbits to your garden, now is the time to select seeds to plant this Spring.



So Long Suburbia

Mrs. Gina Loehr

My mother-in-law, Rosie, grew up on a farm and always wanted to marry a farmer. Her dream came true when she met Norm — who lived a staggering eight miles away — and married him at eighteen years old. She farmed by his side, raised eleven children with his help, and lived with him until the day he died in the same house on the family homestead that his grandfather first occupied in 1880. She loved both her husband, and his way of life. It was her way of life too. Some days, I envy her.

I grew up in the suburbs. I always wanted to marry a musician and move to a big city, but I fell in love with a farmer and although he can sing like Toby Keith when he's in the right mood, he never learned to read a note of music.

I moved to the farm on our wedding day. That night, still clad in my massive white gown, Joe picked me up and carried me across the threshold into the century-old farmhouse that was to become my new home. Crossing over that line was more symbolic than I possibly could have realized at the time. On that day, I left behind my urban inclinations and became a Farmer's Wife who lived on a six-hundred-acre dairy farm in southeastern Wisconsin.

Farmer's Wife wasn't a role I was well prepared for. The whole thing felt kind of like a mythical fairy tale with the embarrassing insignificance of a nursery rhyme. Was I really pledging to chant e-i-e-i-o for the rest of my life and resigning myself to a fate of decapitating blind mice? I remember my boss from Cincinnati getting confused and thinking that my boyfriend was a lumberjack. Paul Bunyan, Old MacDonald, what's the difference? All the stuff of storybooks, those farmer / logger / earthy guys who did work that nobody still does in the modern world. Right?

Wrong, it turns out. There is in fact a thriving subculture of real life farmers that operate actual farms. Farmers have families and hobbies and cars and opinions and animals and annual conventions, and they are not all ancient men wearing blue overalls and straw hats. In fact, I have yet to meet one of those. And to top it off, some of them are women.

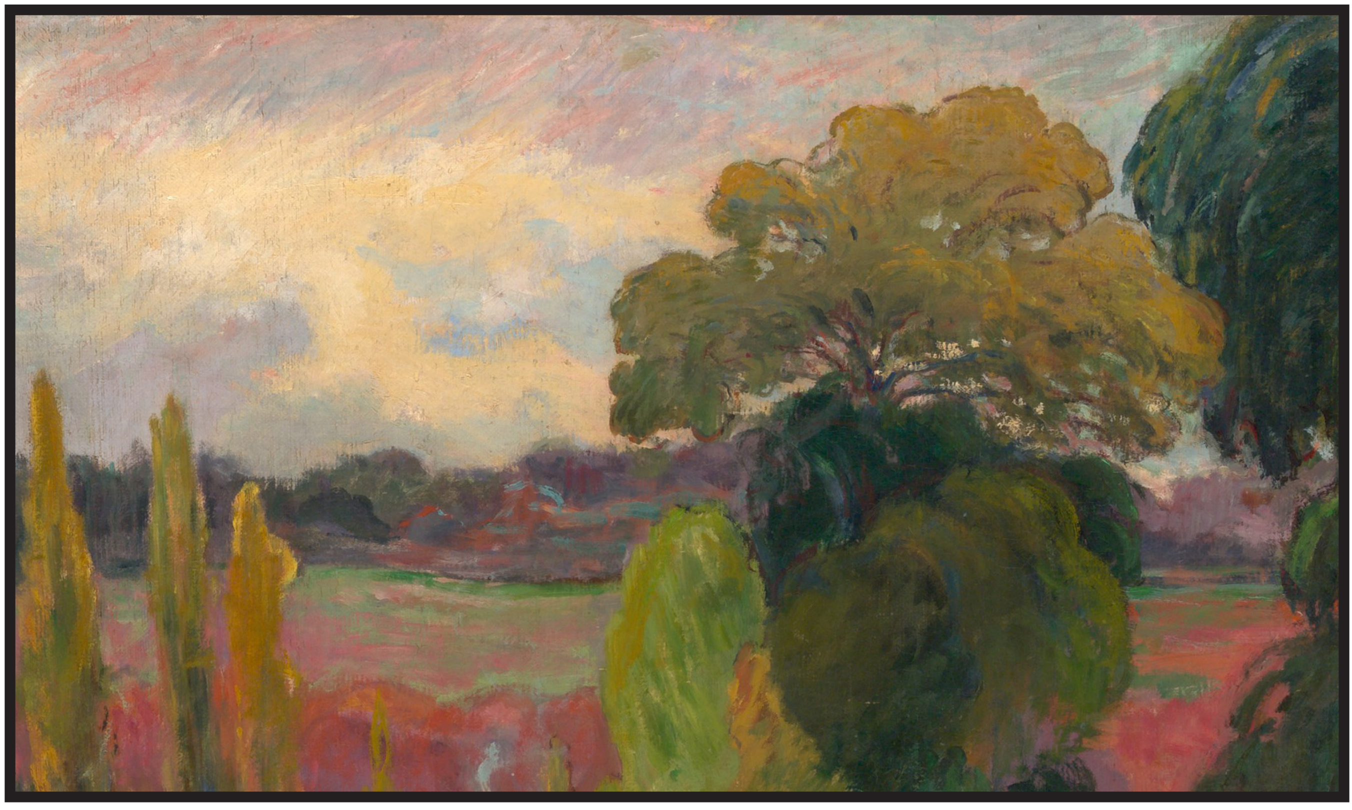
The indispensable, life-giving, and often grueling work of a farmer is anything but child's play. Every human being on planet earth depends upon the commitment and generosity of farmers – many of whom toil long hours in challenging conditions for the love of the land in spite of little monetary reward. Without them, we would not be able to walk into a grocery store – or drive to the pickup canopy – and fill our car(t)s with sustenance. I suppose I always knew food came from farms; I just didn't realize that farmers were, well, real people. Until I met Joe.

I had a bit of a crash course after meeting my own handsome farmer. I learned, for example, that the green stuff I drove by on my way from Ohio to Wisconsin was usually an intentionally planned and planted field of alfalfa or rye grass to feed livestock, not just somebody's big front lawn or an empty space between fields of corn. The trips we made back and forth through the vast stretches of Indiana farmland always left me astonished when I observed how fascinated Joe was by that rural midwestern landscape, and how much information he could share with me about the fields he saw out of the corner of his eye as we whizzed along I-65.

On my first visit to Loehr Dairy I also learned that the metal gate things that the noses of cows were often stuck through weren't cruel devices that paralyzed the bovine creatures in a headlock all day long. They were just freely moving cow cubbies that enabled the girls to space out and enjoy their lunch without battling for dominance. When you bring a group of cows together to enjoy a comfortable, sheltered environment, you run the risk of Bossy bullying Bessy. A few tricks of the trade help everybody get their fair share. The metal thingies are part of that wisdom. I guess I never watched the cows I drove by for longer than twenty seconds, because if I had I would have noticed that they could move around freely at their leisure in what, it turns out, is called a free stall barn. Ah.

Did I mention that I learned cows were girls? Most of the time, anyway — at dairy farms at least. It probably took me a good three years to stop calling the heifer calves "he." Now, I cringe when I hear a non-farm visitor do that. But then I remember the pre-rural, suburbanite me and a wave of merciful compassion floods my soul. I, too, was so ignorant about the realities of animal husbandry and the work that goes on at these places upon which so much of our livelihood, our health, and our survival depends: family farms.

There was a time when I knew nothing about the depth of love that a farmer has for his animals and the intimate connection he feels to his land. There was a



time when I hadn't tasted for myself the profound beauty and significance of life on the farm. Rosie understood it all from day one. I'm still learning, and sometimes the process is painful. Those are the days I envy the preparation Rosie had for her position as Farmer's Wife. But sometimes, like right now, I'm grateful for the chance to cross over that great divide. I may be one of very few people who have left the comfort of suburbia for the sweat, the smells and the solitude of the farm, but it gives me a voice that needs to be heard. It's good here on the other side, my friends. There's a beauty, an importance, a necessity to this life that is too often missed by the untrained eye.

Those who are born into it can see it clearly. But those who gaze upon it like a distant mystery might need a kind of agricultural coach to journey alongside them as they contemplate the values, the significance, and maybe even the call of the primordial vocation of farming. I enjoy every chance I get to be that kind of mediator for folks.

But really, the best thing to do is to go find yourself a farmer. You don't have to marry him. Just step on his soil. Resolve to inhale deeply while you're standing in his barn (trust me, it works better to just give in than to try to resist). Listen to the stories and ask your questions. I bet you'll be pleasantly surprised by what you see when you take a good look at the view from the farm.

'A Farm in Brittany'. Paul Gauguin. Circa 1894.

Mrs. Gina Loehr

Mrs. Loehr is the author of five books and the mother of six children. She is a frequent speaker and guest on national television and radio programs. She writes from her home in Wisconsin, which doubles as the Loehr dairy — a century-old family farm. She writes 'The View from the Farm' column in Hearth & Field.

Sometime after departing suburbia and finding herself availed of an endless supply of milk, Gina began making her own yogurt. Learn the story and the recipe on HearthAndField.com.

"

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

"

William Shakespeare

Three Ways Chickens Help Your Garden

The first-time chick owner has visions of a flock ambling freely about the backyard or homestead, in tranquil harmony with nature. Then reality (in the form of full grown chickens) arrives to shatter that lovely image. Chickens' quirky habits cause a wide range of problems, which can make it difficult to fully free-range them. They will leave feces tie-dyed across the back porch, they'll scatter freshly spread mulch across the yard, and they'll dig out new plants wherever they find them. But with a bit of clever redirection, these same habits can be turned to great benefit. The chickens' defecating, scratching, and pecking are all useful tools in a fruitful garden. Here are three simple ways that chickens can help your garden.

1. Chickens Help Create Great Compost

If you put old grass clippings, leaves, or vegetable scraps in a shallow pile in your chicken pen, the chickens will scratch around in the pile. This scratching will keep airflow on the decomposing material and speed the composting process. Instead of using a pitchfork to turn your compost pile by hand, you can let your chickens do it for you.

Not only that, chicken manure is excellent fertilizer. To use the manure, use wood shavings, straw, or other organic material for bedding in your coop. When you clean out the coop, you can either mound the soiled bedding as its own compost pile, or you can add the chicken manure to your existing compost pile. After allowing the manure and bedding to decompose for a year, you will have nutrient-rich gardening gold to mix into your soil.

2. Chickens Eat Pests and Weeds

Chickens will help control any insect from cucumber beetles and cabbage worms to ticks and mosquitoes; and they love dandelions, plantain, clover, and many other common weeds. When letting your chickens into your garden, surround any reachable plants and fruit with chicken wire to keep them from enjoying your produce. If you want the chickens to help with a pest or weed problem in a particular location, encircle that area with chicken wire and only allow the chickens in that area. They will munch off most green weeds and they'll voraciously hunt down many insects. Even keeping a chicken tractor close to your garden will help keep the bugs at bay.

3. Chickens Prepare the Soil

In the gardening offseasons, when your garden isn't full of vegetables, your chickens can improve the soil by scratching which loosens the ground for planting. Chickens will also eat weed seeds, insects and grubs which hide in the soil during cold months. They will turn these nuisances into great fertilizer. If you have a fence around your garden, letting your chickens free-range in there is easy. A chicken tractor is another great way to move them around your garden in the off-seasons. If you don't have a fence or a chicken tractor, you could make a temporary fence with chicken wire. Whatever way you do it, letting your chickens in your garden during the offseason can be of significant benefit.

With these few tips, you will discover the gardening potential hidden in your chicken. Instead of pooping on your porch, she'll be fertilizing your garden. Instead of scattering your mulch, she'll be turning your compost. Instead of ripping out your young plants, she'll be gobbling up weeds and bugs. Sometimes tranquil harmony with nature needs a bit of help from humans. Give the birds some guidance and their pesky habits can be transformed into key factors in your gardening success.

Wendell Berry Farming Program

An Education in Looking and Seeing

As university programs prepared to begin their fall semester, the usual questions of degree choice and the value of higher education echoed throughout the conversations between editors and authors and in the homes of the broader *Hearth & Field* community. After the practical questions of course curricula and book selection were answered, more profound questions lingered: What is the purpose of higher education? What do students actually gain from going to college in the first place? Is there an alternative way of doing college that marries the practical with the poetic, the tactical with the transcendent? And, of course — Which colleges are worth their salt? With these questions in mind, *Hearth & Field* staff caught up with Dr. Leah Bayens, the Dean of the Wendell Berry Farming Program, perhaps the only college program that offers courses with titles such as "Draft Animal Power Systems" and "Literature of the Rural Experience."

…perhaps the only college program that offers courses with titles such as "Draft Animal Power Systems" and "Literature of the Rural Experience."

To understand the Wendell Berry Farming Program, one must first understand the work and trajectory of the Berry Family and their long-standing commitment to local culture and the continuation of sustainable agrarian practices.

Wendell Berry, a prolific author best known for his poignant essays, beautiful poetry, and semi-biographical rural fiction, hails from a long line of thoughtful and contrarian farmers. The Farming Program is part of a vision shared by Wendell, his father John, and his brother John Jr. of "a state and a nation of prosperous well-tended farms serving and supporting healthy local communities." If we want prosperous well-tended farms that are in a healthy relationship with their land and community, we need well-formed and competent farmers, ones whose vision of the land is commensurate with their ability to work it. Wendell and his daughter Mary continue the family's work of building local culture through The Berry Center, which Mary runs. The center is home to an archive, an agrarian cultural center, and a beef program patterned on the tobacco cooperatives that Mary's father and grandfather helped organize to ensure that farmers made healthy profits and kept their money in local economies. In addition to running the center, Mary is also the one who initiated the idea of the Wendell Berry Farming Program, which began in 2012 at St. Catharine College, run by the Dominican Sisters of Peace.

Enter Dr. Leah Bayens, the English major whose interest in the ethos of rural culture and responsible ecology led her to study muck manuals and the long conversation around land use and the way it shapes rural identity. Dr. Bayens was tasked with leading the program and developing a curriculum that integrates the liberal arts into an agriculture education and moves freely from the page to the field while keeping both in attentive conversation. Coursework on rural literature, the use of draft animals, pasture management, soil microbiology, and the craft of felling trees, is combined with farm planning, management, and marketing.

Dr. Bayens emphasizes the students' unique exposure to — and integration of — the insights of the program's namesake with sustainable farming practices. "Wendell's thoughts from the *Unsettling of America* to the re-settling of America, and now we are here in 2020, and the focus is on grappling with the truth that it has never been settled, not in a sustainable, real way. The desire for a sense of place, people and commitment is palpable." Literature, local history, practical knowledge and a deep sense of membership all converge into a farming program that feels as if it were fashioning men and women who are not only fit for the land, but capable of building a culture that is more humane and just.

Students read Virgil, Aldo Leopold, Chaucer, as well as contemporary pieces by Crystal Wilkinson, and then put on their muck boots and take the reins of a draft horse to cut a row in a field. They learn forestry from experts who share an appreciation for their craft and love for their place. They participate in the beef cooperative, "Our Home Place Meat", and learn first-hand the challenges of raising, producing, marketing, and selling meat. They meet the kin of black tenant farmers who helped build Henry County, and they hear the tales, both good and bad, that have formed the ethos of the land and community. They walk the hollers and read stories in the very places they were written. They are taught to look and to see, to enter into the richness and depth of the people, the place, and the land around them. Perhaps this is the most striking difference between what happens at the Wendell Berry Farming Program and other college programs. The focus is not just on the looking — the passive, the utilitarian, the transactional — it is on seeing, knowing, relating, walking with, and entering into.

"While most programs prepare students to flow out of the country, away from the land, we are educating for homecoming, for the re-establishment of local farming and local culture."
-Dr. Leah Bayens

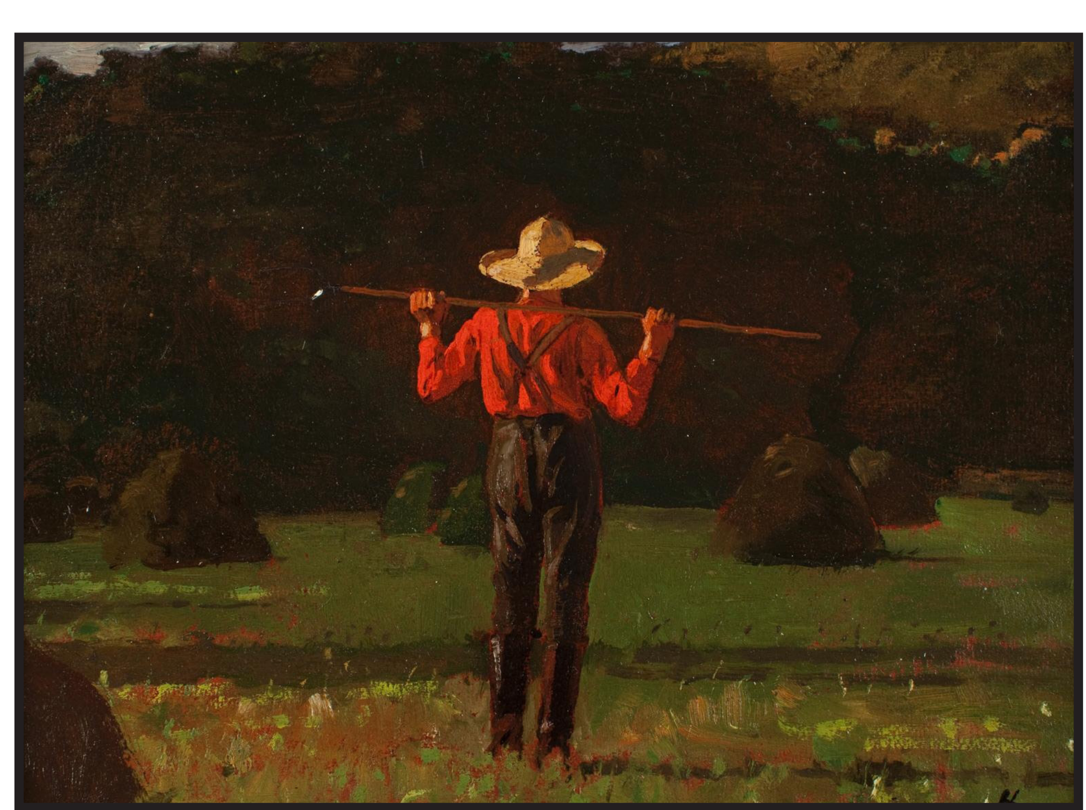
After St. Catharine sadly closed its doors in 2016, the Wendell Berry Farming Program found a new partnership with Sterling College in Vermont. Sterling's passion for agriculture and the appreciation of place has allowed the program to remain anchored in Henry County, Kentucky. Thanks to a generous grant, the tuition-free residential undergraduate program continues to accept twelve students each year.

All of the program's students are active farmers or intend to farm full-time. They come from Henry County and all over the United States, committed to a two-year intensive program that will form their heart, minds, and the work of their hands. "While most programs prepare students to flow out of the country, away from the land, we are educating for homecoming, for the re-establishment of local farming and local culture." Dr. Bayens continues, "We seek to teach them an

appreciation for serving a place and being a member of a community....It is really comforting to know, not just for my students but for myself, that there are good minds and bonds of deep affection for the place they belong." This sense of responsibility to the land, to oneself, and to the community is a far cry from many programs that sadly confuse the ends of their work for production and profit at any cost. "We want them to farm for a living—not a killing," says Bayens.

With less than one percent of Americans farming, we need more farmers. Farmers who are competent, capable, and committed to their place. Farmers who see the world as the Berry Family does. A vast divide exists between the people producing the food and those consuming it. This divide is artificial, unhealthy, unsustainable, and unwarranted. While the Wendell Berry Program is small, it presents a model that can restore the underlying ethos necessary to all culture. It can nourish our appreciation of place and of the people who inhabit a place, as well as the vital relationship between the two. If a small college with a small program in rural Kentucky can produce students equipped to rebuild the culture, what does this say about what we ought to hope for and demand from higher education in general?

As our conversation with Dr. Bayens drew to a close, Mary Berry flagged her down in the parking lot. "Just wanted to say hi, and see how you are doing. So, how are you doing?" For the next 120 seconds we are let in on a little piece of what makes The Berry Center and the Wendell Berry Farming Program so beautiful and compelling. Real people, serving a real place, never losing sight of what it means to belong to a community and to each other.



'Farmer with a Pitchfork' by Winslow Homer. Circa 1874.

Paper wearing thin?

Our webpages are almost as nice.

While we love the feel and tangibility of a paper journal — and the fact that by now your edition may be cabbage stained, thanks to page 30 — sometimes the web has its advantages.

Join the community of readers who have access to a growing collection of thoughtful and engaging articles, tutorials, recipes, interviews, videos, podcasts, and more at HearthAndField.com.

Sofrito is About to Change Your Life

Before we go any further, take out your calendar and a permanent marker.

Seriously, do it now. I'll wait for you.

Got them? Good. Circle today's date — you are going to want to remember it. Today is a very special day for you and the fortunate people who feed at your table. Today is the day you leveled up as a cook. Today is the day you learned about *sofrito*.

Sofrito is the magical mixture of aromatic herbs and vegetables that we Puerto Ricans use as the base for most of our cooking. It will add freshness and flavor to your food and fill your home with the fragrant aroma of an island paradise. It is easy to make from inexpensive ingredients that you probably already have in your pantry and refrigerator (or garden). Despite its affordability and simplicity, it will add a richness and complexity to your food that will make your family wonder if you've been taking cooking lessons on the sly. It may sound crazy, but after you've made it, you'll understand why I'm tempted to claim it can raise the dead. (It can't.) Nevertheless, it has been known to rouse layabout teenagers from their Lazarus-like lethargy and lure long-lost loved ones back to your kitchen.

This recipe is the very basic version of *sofrito* that I make from ingredients you can find in any grocery store. If you lived on the island, you would definitely include *culantro* and *ají dulce* in your *sofrito*. If you're wondering, culantro is to cilantro what a Clydesdale is to a racehorse, and *Ají dulce* — a mild, sweet chili pepper native to Puerto Rico related to habanero peppers —is a house cat compared to habanero's Bengal tiger. You can usually find both of these at your local Asian or Latin market, if you're fortunate enough to have one nearby.

—Mr. Rob Drapeau

Recipe

What you need

½ cup of olive oil
2 bell peppers, cored and cut into big chunks
1 bunch of cilantro, stems and all, rinsed.
2 yellow onions, peeled and cut into eight or so pieces
16-20 cloves of garlic or more if you love yourself
1 tablespoon of dried oregano
1 tablespoon of white or apple cider vinegar
6-8 ají dulce (optional)
4-5 culantro leaves (optional)

What you do

1. Pour the olive oil into a blender or large food processor.

2. Add the rest of the ingredients all at once or a little at a time. The order doesn't really matter, as long as you don't start with the cilantro; it doesn't always get drawn into the blades, which is annoying. I recommend adding the ingredients in the order listed so that the oil and peppers will draw the cilantro into the blades while the heavier onions force it down.

3. Blend until pureed.

Notes

This recipe makes a lot (about four cups), but sofrito freezes beautifully and tends to get used up quickly anyway.

Most recipes that call for sofrito use about ½ cup for every 6-8 servings. Depending on how soon you intend to use it, you can store the sofrito in a large Mason jar or recycled spaghetti sauce jar in your refrigerator for about a week, or you can freeze it in ½ cup portions for future use. Growing up, we would freeze sofrito in plastic ice cube trays and then transfer the cubes into a large freezer bag. Whenever we needed *sofrito*, we would throw 3-4 cubes into the pot straight from the freezer.

The food of Puerto Rico, like its people, is very accommodating. If you don't have yellow onions, use red ones or white ones. The same goes for the bell peppers — any color will do. And if you're missing an ingredient or two, *no te preocupes*. Don't worry about it. I promise, you will be making *sofrito* for the rest of your life.

Some people will sauté the *sofrito* before freezing it, and others will insist that tomatoes are essential and include them in their recipes. I don't do either. I just make sauteing the *sofrito* in tomato sauce my first step when I'm cooking.

Sofrito makes your soups, stews, and sauces sing. You will be amazed at how versatile it is.

For your first go round, I recommend making *Arroz Blanco* con *Habichuelas Guisadas* (Puerto Rican White Rice and Beans) - see recipe on HearthAndField.com.

Why You Should Care About Opera

Italy, Lockdown, and a Review of the Met Online

Mr. Samuel Butterfon

For those who lack the religious resources to give the Covid crisis any meaningful orientation, one of the few moments of spiritual significance in this absurd and ongoing drama was when tottering Italy joined in song before the world. The videos went viral more rapidly than the virus itself, swiftly touching millions. The world was moved by Italy's national solidarity in beauty and by its humanist resilience to the staggering crush of sudden tragedy and pain.

The global pandemic of operatic illiteracy naturally meant that very few of those millions of worldwide viewers ever recognized or understood the song that Italy was actually singing in its moment of national trial. It was the *Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, Va pensiero*, from Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Nabucco*. It is known by heart by every Italian man, woman, and child. At every performance of *Nabucco*, when the moment arrives, the whole show must stop and offer an immediate encore, replaying the gorgeous chorus a second time, the entire house this time joining together with the singers on stage. The lyrics are a poetic rendition of Psalm 137: "By the Rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept…." *Nabucco* is Nebuchadnezzar, and in the story those who sing are the exiled Jews, pining with pained longing for their lost homeland: *O mia patria si bel e perduta!*

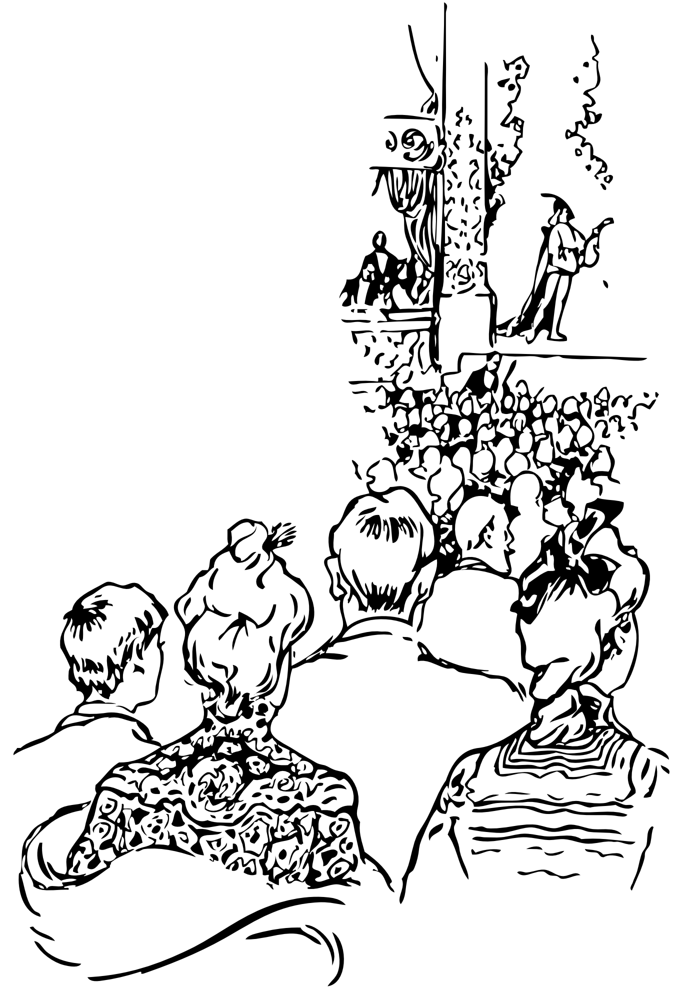
Verdi himself wrote *Nabucco* from the depths of personal tragedy and despair, having lost his young daughter, young son, and beloved wife in the space of three years. He wrote it, as well, at a moment when the Italian nation itself was crumbling and being remade in the *Risorgimento*. For this reason, the song—whose opening line means "fly my thoughts"—itself took wings and became a kind of national anthem for the fledgling nation, which saw itself in the Hebrews' shoes and looked for hope to Victor Emmanuele, their new king. "Viva V-E-R-D-I!" became a rallying cry from Sicily to Piedmont: "Long life to Verdi," voice of the nation, and "Long Live, Vittorio Emmanuele Re d'Italia."

It is hard to imagine anything comparable in the American experience. Happily, our nation did not spontaneously join to sing together, in quarantine, cathartic melodies from *Frozen*. Modern pop culture has not yet so degraded and uniformly defined us. The power of opera — which was the pop culture of a better age — is not restricted to any one nation, however, and might still do its part to elevate our national sympathy with beauty. Italy, France, Germany, and Russia have all contributed masterworks to the operatic canon. The American contribution to the world of opera has been largely on the level of performance and in this regard, the Metropolitan Opera of New York (for all its foibles) should shape American musical identity and pride. It is a world leader with an illustrious past and the closest we have to *La Scala* or *Beyreuth*.

Several years ago, the Met began offering extraordinary, high-quality HD productions of many of its operas. More than 250,000 subscribers now regularly watch live performances or select from a new, huge catalogue of titles on demand. It is a subscription well worth the price, for the fact is, the cost of tickets to a single show (not to mention tickets to travel to New York) will quickly exceed the price you pay. Filmed opera, moreover, is in many ways (not all, of course) simply a superior experience to a live performance. Even the best opera glasses and seats in the house will leave unseen a thousand details that are made accessible by artful editing and camera angles. Cinema and film (which should always be distinguished from Hollywood "blockbusters" and mere movies) is quite frankly an art form in which America has a true genius (despite *Frozen*) and, in this regard, the Met's fusion of opera and film pumps new life in the opera world and creates an entirely new way to encounter the classical repertoire. The many luscious productions that have marked out the Met's tradition over the years—Zefferelli's amazing stagings of Puccini, for instance—attain a whole new atmosphere and power when viewed on the screen.

As if to extend the Italians' operatic initiative, one of the silver linings of the Covid ordeal has been that, among the many theaters and museums around the globe that have made artistic treasures available online to a world confined, the Met has been offering a free opera online every night. While there are many reasons

to worry about the artistic establishment in our day—and the Met cannot be excluded—there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of its claim that, in trying times, the power of art should not be silenced. The opportunities that online operas provide for recreation and catharsis, for arbitrary pauses in the middle of important scenes, for the guiltless enjoyment of snacks all during the show, and, of course, for the wide expansion of one's musical culture and general humanistic equipment, is simply terrific. No guilt should complicate this distracted manner of watching opera; consultation of Stendahl will show that it stands in the best Italian tradition. We thus give the highest recommendation to Met Opera On Demand and nightly online. Following a sixteen dollar purchase of George Martin's delightful classic, *The Opera Companion*, the rawest novice can confidently take on any opera any night. With perseverance one can conquer the canon within a year.



Mr. Samuel Butterofen

Mr. Butterofen is a native of the new world and a resident of the old. He enjoys literature, fine & performing arts, horseback riding, and gourmet pickles.

Be sure to read Samuel's important Fieldnote on page 76, 'How to Properly Mount a Horse'.

Drink Like a Trappist

A Short, Wet Interview & Cursory Review of the World's Best Beers

Hearth & Field Editors caught up with Dr. Jared Staudt over a virtual pint as we discussed the best beer he ever drank, and why Trappist beers are his preferred way to celebrate just about anything.

H&F: Given all the research you did for your book The Beer Option, can you share the best beer you ever drank?

It's almost impossible to pick one beer, but my favorites are the Belgian Trappists. I'll never forget enjoying Orval on the grounds of the Trappist Abbey in Belgium. It possesses a beguiling taste, from its Brettanomyces wild yeast and citrusy hoppiness. It's slightly sweet, complemented by an herbal dryness, tart orangeness, and funkiness from the wild yeast, I had it paired with a steak, smothered with the cheese also made by the Cistercian monks at the Abbey. The flavor reflects the place itself, and as I drank it overlooking the medieval ruins of the green valley, I couldn't help but think of how the work of the monks' hands and their craftsmanship elevate the culture wherever their beer is enjoyed. Who and where the beer comes from is really an important and underappreciated aspect.

H&F: Why is location and local agriculture so important to the flavor of beer?

Beer is very much a reflection of place. You are literally drinking the local environment, with water as the main though largely overlooked ingredient. In Belgium, the yeasts used by these monasteries have been carefully cultivated for generations, Orval, as I mentioned, uses a wild yeast with characteristics unique to that local place and nowhere else in the world.

Beer reflects the local culture and economy as well. Until fairly recently, American beers were mass produced, standardized without much flavor, and with little connection to a particular place. However, when you open up a bottle of Chimay, you are entering into the life, work, and charitable projects of the monks who have been committed to their place for generations. You get a taste of the local Belgian and Trappist culture, in a way that should help create culture in that moment—gathering people together over food and anchoring conversation and celebration. You can also "Brew Like a Monk," as Stan Hieronymus puts it. Homebrewers can purchase a clone of the yeast strains used at these various monasteries and bring a little piece of the monk's legacy into their own brew.

H&F – What is your standard for choosing a good beer?

I start with what is on sale. No, seriously, I love to try new beers, especially any new micro-brews from the local area. I also try to have some good beers on hand to share; things that want to introduce to other people. There's nothing better than sharing a large bottle of Chimay, experiencing it together and hearing people say: "Wow, this is what beer tastes like." When you consider the quality and the craft it blows you away. Now, add in a great food pairing with convivial company and you are creating something more than just sharing a pint but entering into festivity.

We often open a beer and take it for granted, especially if we think it was produced in a large factory or assembly line as some utilitarian good. But with a good Trappist beer it creates a shared experience and an opportunity to investigate Catholic culture. It opens us up to questions, like: "Why do the monks brew?" "How is brewing related to the building of culture?" And, most importantly, "what does this excellent beer say about the *labora* of the work that goes into our food and drink, and, dare I say, also the *ora*, the prayer that guided its brewing?"

H&F – Recommendations for a good Trappist Ale?

1. Orval Trappist Ale. 2. Chimay – Blue 'Grande Reserve'. 3. Rochefort 6, 8 or 10. 4. Spencer Trappist Ale (St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer Massachusetts). 5. Tre Fontane Tripel (Rome). 6. Engelszell (Austria).

How to Properly Mount a Horse

Horse-riding has become, over the past several thousand years, an increasingly important skill. What's more, horses are the noblest of beasts, and your own personal nobility is directly proporational to the amount of time you spend in their company. Here are the steps you need to take to get started:

First, get a horse.

Now — position your horse on clear, level ground. Stand on the horse's left, near her shoulders, facing her backside. Use your left hand to take hold of the reins and a bit of the mane. Grip the reins firmly throughout the entire mount so that the horse knows you are present and so that you can gain control if she starts to move, but do not pull hard on the horse's mouth while she is still.

Take the stirrup in your right hand and put the toe of your left foot into it. Now let go of the stirrup and grab the horn or pommel. Do not grab the back of the saddle as it might cause slippage.

Hop upwards and swing yourself over the horse, like a proper cowpoke. The word *hop* is key in emulating said cowpoke and avoiding various catastrophes. It is important that you do not drag yourself up as though climbing an equine wall, but instead launch yourself with a hopping motion emanating from your right foot. Be sure not to kick the horse as you swing over her. A mounting block can help.

Slip gently and comfortably onto the saddle, and secure your right toe in the stirrup. Your horse and her veterinarian will appreciate it if you remember this word *gently*, and do not slam down on her back.

Orient yourself to the vista from atop your steed, take a deep breath, and say something affirming to her such as, "atta girl."

Advanced riders may consider military style mounting instead — the main advantage being the opportunity to click your heals together mid-mount. But do not attempt military without the guidance of an experienced horse person. Actually, do not attempt any of this without the guidance of an experienced horse person; there is a fair bit more to it than can fit onto the single 8.5 x 11 page I was offered for this explanation. But definitely do consider spending some time with horses, the noblest of beasts.

Sketch by Jules-Élie Delaunay. Circa 1874.

Understanding Suffering in Times of Pandemic (or Anytime)

A Review of C.S. Lewis' Classic *The Problem of Pain*

"In the world you will have tribulation." (John 16:33) Coming from a Messiah who was expected to overcome the tribulation and suffering of the broken and fallen world, this is an odd statement. But to think that Jesus came to eradicate all suffering is to misunderstand Christian theology. Since the earliest days of Christianity, suffering and suffering well have been respected and revered. It is written into the DNA of Western Civilization. First, in the Jews — who knew the sufferings of the world all too well and took pride in embracing them, never thinking of suffering as a lack of God's providential care — and, later, in the Christians who regarded suffering as a means of participating in the redemption of a fallen, not-yet-perfected world.

In modern times, many skeptics and coffee shop intellectuals view suffering as meaningless at best, and, at worst, as evidence that God does not exists, but if he does, he is evil. Yes, in the world there will be tribulation, and we cannot escape it; on this gospel point, at least, skeptics and believers can fervidly agree. And, despite our best attempts to avoid suffering, ignore it, or curse it, things like global pandemics that kill more than one million people sober us. They jar us and remind us of the very real disconnect between our aspirations for permanence and the fact of suffering and death. There is no shortage of suffering to be had, despite increased wealth, extended life spans, and advanced technological marvels that reduce suffering considerably (imagine basic surgery without anesthesia).

As families, churches, and nations continue to struggle through this dark time of pandemic, countless millions of us are no doubt asking the questions that we always ask in such times: Why would an all-good and all-powerful God allow us to suffer? What is one to do in the face of immense suffering, communal or personal? How are we to make sense of the suffering that, despite our best efforts, always comes, eventually? These are real questions, hard questions, tenacious questions — but they are questions we should not shy away from.

Thankfully, C.S. Lewis, the great British author and lay theologian, did not shy away when he was invited to write a book addressing those questions during the early days of World War II. Titled simply *The Problem of Pain*, his book is one of the most lucid treatments on the matter to be found in modern literature. The ideas Lewis presents are both insightful and comforting, especially in days such as these. He also definitively lays to rest the nihilistic concerns of our skeptical friends from the coffee shop.

Clive Staples Lewis was, in 1940, not yet the revered author that he is today. It would be another year before he gave the series of popular Sunday addresses on BBC Radio that would later serve as the basis for his book *Mere Christianity* and another decade until he would beging publishing the *Chronicles of Narnia*. In 1940, Lewis was a fellow and tutor of English at Magdalen College, Oxford, a published author of a few books, and a member of the recently inaugurated group of writers and thinkers known as the "Inklings." He felt entirely incapable of providing a treatise on suffering, especially as Great Britain was being cast into the throes of a long and bloody war. Despite his reluctance — and perhaps because of this humility — his work remains as salient today as it was eighty years ago.

In the opening salvo, Lewis provides a personal account of his former atheism and strong arguments for and against using the evidence of pain and suffering as grounds for rejecting the existence of God. He goes on to explain the origins of religious belief in general, and of Christianity in particular, to frame the question of pain and suffering within the sister sciences of philosophy and theology — though one need not be a philosopher or theologian to understand his approachable writing.

The opening chapters discuss the problem of pain and suffering as tied to the problem of evil. If God is all good and all-powerful, then he would use his power to eliminate evil and the pain and suffering it causes. Since evil is allowed, and we experience pain and suffering, God must be either not all-good or not all-powerful. This argument has been successfully contested by many others, ancient and contemporary, but Lewis's treatment uses a type of reverence for the irreverent that is refreshing. He follows the opposing arguments to their natural conclusions with patience and wit and presents the gift of free-will precisely as a gift, one that in the end we must take responsibility for.

"We can, perhaps, conceive of a world in which God corrected the results of this abuse of free-will by His creatures at every moment: so that a wooden beam became soft as grass when it was used as a weapon, and the air refused to obey me if I attempted to set up in it the sound waves that carry lies or insults. But such a world would be one in which wrong actions were impossible, and in which, therefore, freedom of the will would be void."

Lewis develops this theme throughout the book without eliminating the genuine scandal of pain, suffering, and the challenges, real and imagined, it presents us. Having dealt with God's power and God's goodness in the opening chapters, he moves on to human wickedness and its origins in the Fall, or the perennial choice for self. These chapters may be the hardest to read and, simultaneously, the most worth reading. He pulls no punches in articulating in the most practical terms the disastrous consequences of sin and our broad complicity with it and, perhaps most importantly, God's call for us to acknowledge our sin and, in so doing, participate with his grace to overcome it. How distasteful that we would sin, suffer the consequences, and then curse God in his goodness who would hold us to the laws, natural and spiritual, that we so enjoy and depend on. "When we merely say that we are bad, the 'wrath' of God seems a barbarous doctrine; as soon as we perceive our badness, it appears inevitable, a mere corollary from God's goodness." (33)

Midway through the book, Lewis enters into the struggles of human pain. He takes this step only after presenting the basic apologetic for the Christian faith: there is a God, and God is not us. And, though we are fallen and sinful, God comes to save us. In this context, Lewis teases out the type of pain and suffering that is meant for our good — the normal struggles that serve as discipline that chastens and forms us — and the type of pain which must be, well, suffered through. "It is men, not God, who have produced racks, whips, prisons, slavery, guns, bayonets, and bombs; it is by human avarice or human stupidity, not by the churlishness of nature, that we have poverty and overwork. But there remains, nonetheless, much suffering which cannot thus be traced to ourselves." (55) It is only in these later chapters that Lewis gets more prescriptive. What are the fruits of living the Gospel? Certainly, less suffering of one nature —those things that are caused by our own avarice and stupidity —and more of another —those things caused by others, and, still yet more remote, weather and pandemic.

The most frequently quoted line of the book is "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." But this is only part of the story. God shouts to get our attention, but he also provides the sweet relief that comes from knowing that he is with us in our suffering and that it need not be meaningless. Lest we think that pain is only pedagogical, pain is also redemptive and part of God's plan for our conversion. Like our Jewish forefathers in faith, Christians do not seek out suffering — it is not a good in and of itself. "What is good in any painful experience is, for the sufferer, his submission to the will of God, and, for the spectators, the compassion aroused and the acts of mercy to which it leads." Suffering is a reminder of our true nature, and true identity as sons and daughters of God in this "fallen and partially redeemed universe."

Following the final chapters on the ultimate suffering, Hell, a few notes on animal pain, and a discussion about the alleviation of suffering in Heaven, Lewis provides a cogent and challenging examination of the tribulations and pains of this life. Rather than providing a prescription to solve the scandal, he provides a context for why the scandal should be one at all. "In a sense, it [Christianity] creates, rather than solves, the problem of pain, for pain would be no problem unless, side by side with our daily experience of this painful world, we had received what we think a good assurance that ultimate reality is righteous and loving." (8) Some twenty years later, when his beloved wife, Joy Davidman, died of cancer after only three years of marriage, the theoretical examination of suffering in *The Problem of Pain* became tangible. Upon that episode, he wrote his second book on pain, *A Grief Observed*. As one Lewis biographer explained, "it takes courage to live through suffering; and it takes honesty to observe it. C. S. Lewis had both."

If you are looking for a good book to read in the middle of the pandemic, or any crisis — or any time at all really —*The Problem of Pain* provides an astute reflection with helpful and illuminating insight into one of the most pressing questions of human life.

"In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

'Béatrix' by Pierre-Louis Pierson. 1856–57.

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OK, cut it out— this is getting weird.

☐ **I HATED IT.**

Alright — we hadn't actually anticipated this one. If you have a chance, drop by HearthAndField.com/contact and let us know what we can do better. The good news is, the paper this is printed on is suprisingly compostable.

About the Cover Art

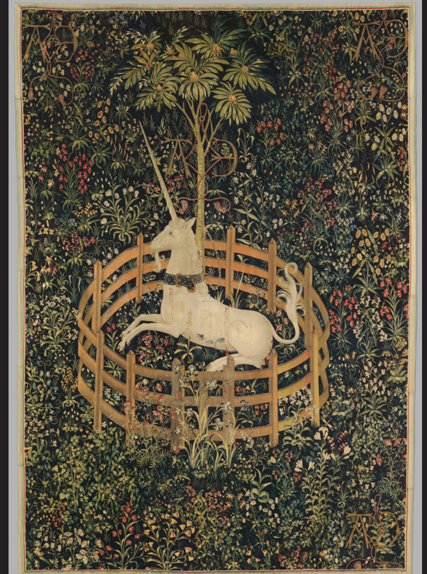
Have you ever tried to take a picture of a luminescent harvest moon hanging low on the horizon? Or a lilliputian army of insects, carting food across a forest floor in the fall? In your photographs of the first scene, the moon probably appeared disappointingly small; in pictures of the second, the smallest obstructions may have been dishearteningly large. Looking at the photos simply doesn't compare to seeing the subjects of the photos *in situ*.

This isn't a criticism of photography — H&F loves good photography and good photographers. But the frustration we've all sometimes experienced with our cameras is a reminder that machines are different from people. People swoop up to the moon and down to the tiny details of pebbles, petals, and praying mantids. We see and know at the same moment. It takes no time at all. If we balance our attention properly, we can catch some truth about the whole world simply by looking at it. Machines may replicate a scene, but they will never be able to replicate seeing.

Whether the instrument is a camera, brush, chisel, or pen, the mission of an artist is to help people see more deeply. And, in a nutshell, the mission of Hearth & Field is to help people see, more deeply, the uniting beauty present in all the big and small matters of life. We've chosen to incorporate into our cover image examples of artists seeing and sharing both the big picture and the tiny details. It is a composite made up of seven equally sized vertical panels drawn from seven separate sources. The odd-numbered panels come from paintings featuring broad horizons and expansive landscapes. The even-numbered panels contain detailed close-ups from other works, which are reminiscent of interior, mural decor.

This collage of alternating vistas and close-up views accomplish several things. It mixes up and juxtaposes the near and the far, the internal and the external, the hearth and the field. It also reflects the universal rhythm and shifting focus of daily life — horizons, action, and harvest coupled with contemplation, stillness, and preservation. And it visually expresses the nature and purpose of this journal.

Throughout our days and throughout our lives, we must balance our attention between the now and the not yet, between movement and rest, between sowing and reaping, between next steps and ultimate destinations. We all must do this in pursuit of a life that embodies all things good, true, and beautiful. So must Hearth & Field.



LOVE
GOOD