



Bloom Where You Are Planted

By Rev. Walt H. Windley, Senior Director of Spiritual Care & Grief Services, VIA Health Partners

It's confession time for this writer; I come from a long line of family members who can work magic in their gardens. However, friends, that green thumb phenomena passed over this guy! Who knew that overwatering was actually a thing (obviously, lesson learned!). I remember going to my grandmother's house in Gastonia around this time of year and being greeted by a blooming array of rose bushes, daffodils, crocuses and hyacinths. Her front yard always came alive through a myriad of colors and smells that sang of a new season and love for playing in the dirt. She and my grandfather (Pop) found great delight sitting on their front porch, soaking in the beauty of nature highlighted by creeping ivy that framed their trellises with a broad dogwood tree that gave the appearance of snow when moved by a gentle breeze. If I close my eyes and conjure those distant memories, I find myself transported to a place that taught me an awful lot about slowing down, being patient for the birth of something new, and resting in the return of what sits just under the surface. My current plant "collection" is water-free and only requires a little dusting; however, much like my grandmother's front yard, I have to wonder about where I am in my own process of growing and becoming in this season of life.

The old phrase "bloom where you are planted" is commonly attributed to Saint Francis de Sales, a Savoyard Catholic prelate who once served as the Bishop of Geneva in the Catholic Church during the early 1600s. He was known for his love of spiritual formation, contributing numerous pieces that were meant to engage laity in a higher calling of devotion and service. While the quote perhaps elicits the image of a blooming flower on a warm spring day, the heart of the sentiment is more about finding oneself in troubled waters or a season of turbulence that calls for an inner work reflecting heart and grit and rootedness. It's about finding a way to battle through the hardship, apathy or injustice where purpose, life and meaning have become blurred or unsure. It's about remembering choice, taking responsibility for one's own wellbeing and offering intent

behind action.

Maybe you have been in that season of life during your journey. You were in a job where you just felt "stuck;" it was like the perennial hamster wheel with no way out. The love affair that first brought you to this work had dimmed to nothing more than a flicker, and the best you could do was simply show up. Maybe you have faced a life-limiting illness, forced to redefine your daily routine and what brings you purpose in a way that you had never planned or dreamed. This was not the vision you had for yourself a decade ago, and the weightiness of indifference has taken over. Maybe you have become so disillusioned by what you see as inequity in this world that you have created more barriers and walls than bridges, effectively shutting yourself off from others or the possibility that hope is still alive. Maybe...just maybe...we have become the victims of our own stories, stunting growth just under the surface and forgetting that we have the potential to break through into the blessed light of a new day.

I would gently suggest that we need to reconsider what role we play in forming our own narrative. It's not going to be easy and navigating troubled waters always requires sacrifice and often forgiveness, even of self. I can't expect someone to want it for me more than I want it for myself. Rootedness is about understanding connection, remembering that I am not an island and choosing wisely the "soil" in which I am planted. It may mean waiting in a season where we intentionally choose to find something of positivity and opportunity. It may mean making a move that is scary and unnerving but offers potential that speaks to the holistic wellness of our being. It may mean redeeming what has been horrific or sad (and not of our doing) as a way of holding onto legacy and memory. Growth takes time; it's about being willing to play the long game.

What would it look like for you to bloom where you are planted? How will you choose to intentionally engage for the sake of your own health...spiritually, emotionally, cognitively and physically?