

## AN IMPROMPTU FIELD TRIP: THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S CREATION

Every student loves a good Field Trip. After all, you are able to get out of school for a day and do something different. Feeling a bit **stir crazy** last Tuesday (my normal day away from the office), and on the spot to a most unsuspecting family member, I proposed a field trip! Sometimes, a spur of the moment activity carries with it the greatest blessings. In this case, I think I hit a home run. "Mom, let's go to the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum today— what do you say?" Thankfully, she agreed (or **humored** her #3 son!) and given Covid-19, I immediately went online to inquire about reservations. I grabbed the earliest available slot (8:30 a.m.) and surmised that if we left right away, we might just complete the 26.2 mile trek (same as a marathon!) in time! Classical music station on, sunglasses in hand, and a hastily prepared thermos of coffee— let's roll! I took far, **far too much** pride when we pulled up to the gate, just as the car clock displayed 8:30 a.m.

We both surmised that it had been decades since we had set foot in the Arboretum. For those unfamiliar, it is run by the University of Minnesota. It was founded in 1958 and over the years has organically grown from its initial size to a sprawling campus of more than **1200 acres**. Over **400,000** people visit the Arboretum each year. It includes 28 different gardens, many works of art, educational opportunities, botanical research, to name just a few. If you enjoy the taste of a Honeycrisp apple (the best in my view!), you can thank the Arboretum gardens, where such research for such a tasty fruit took place! The Arboretum includes a "Three-Mile Drive" enabling visitors the opportunity to experience the beauty of the grounds without even leaving their cars, if desired. It is **only** open to cars and bicycles. We took advantage of this route, and I was completely taken by the beauty of the landscape. Walking paths are also available.

Living in the city core has many advantages, but to be perfectly blunt, I felt like I was 1000 miles away, so quiet, so open, airy and peaceful it was. We were the first car on the road, and never once encountered anyone in front of us. We could stop as desired, get out and take a **photograph**, meander in the car, etc. The **early bird** gets the worm! More importantly it gave us an opportunity to take in the tremendous **variety** and beauty of God's creation. And I will be the first to admit that my knowledge of **horticulture** is woefully lacking. I cannot tell a **Rhododendron** from an Azalea, a Blue Phlox from an Orchid. However at least I know a tulip when I see one— and they were everywhere! Thankfully, the signage was ample enough to explain the various variety of flowers or types of trees, shrubs and even grasses. Adding to this, it was a spectacular day—cool, clear and calm. And nary a mosquito in sight!

Being the type of person who is always interested in history, I inquired if there was a place on the campus where we could learn more about what the Arboretum looked like when first it opened. We were directed to the **library**—music to my ears! My mother graciously accompanied me on the rather long trek to the library. We were **treated like royalty**— presented with newspaper clippings, photographs, and programs from various key events throughout the course of the past 60 years. In retrospect, it was the only way to **fully appreciate** how the space has developed with such care for God's creation over these many decades. **Pope Francis** wrote an encyclical letter on the care of creation, entitled **Laudato Si**. Released on 24 May 2015, it takes its name from **St. Francis of Assisi's** medieval Italian prayer, known to us in English as "Canticle of the Sun."

The encyclical includes the following: "All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents."

(Paragraph 14). Later in the document he writes: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? This question not only concerns the environment in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal.” (Paragraph 160) We should be thinking about these aspects of our world, for the earth is indeed our common home. How do we care for the earth? How do we **protect our environment** and what steps can we take to ensure its health for future generations? If we are not asking these questions, something is wrong.

The U of M Arboretum benefits from more than **35,000 hours** per year of volunteer assistance. I cannot imagine how they could maintain such a property with paid staff alone. What a wonderful place to visit. Slow down, take a long walk, and get out of the house. Spring in Minnesota is a beautiful season. If—as we should—we are able to discern in creation a **reflection of God’s grandeur** and the work of His hands, we will be more inclined to reflect that beauty in our own lives. **May how we care** for God’s beautiful gift of creation and for one another remain in the forefront of our minds and hearts.

- As many of you know, **Deacon Stephen Hilgendorf** is studying for the priesthood as a member of the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter, an approved group of faithful from the Anglican tradition who desired to establish communion with Rome. The ordinariate is equivalent to a diocese, with its own bishop and curial structure, but includes a **married clergy**. Deacon Hilgendorf will be ordained to the priesthood in Houston, TX on **June 29**, after which he begins a new assignment as pastor of the Ordinariate’s parish in Omaha, NE. I am thrilled for him and his young family, though saddened to see him leave us.

- Despite **assurances** from Catholic bishops in Germany that they are not heading towards schism, plans unfolding for their synodal way certainly give the impression that this is a distinct possibility. They do not heed the warnings as they chart their own course. Unity with Rome can never be taken for granted. It must be fostered, preserved (even when there are disputes) and stressed. I pray that they do not take such a step, even though history proves that it has happened before!
- The number of **shootings** in St. Paul is truly alarming. **Sixty-three** individuals have been shot in the first four months of 2021 alone. Reports of “shots fired” have doubled since last year. Coupled with a diminished Police Force (**down 50** officers since 2019 due to retirements and resignations), our capitol city is in the midst of severe challenges. We must address the root causes of this spike in crime.
- Let there be light! The Shrines of the Nations are now open before and after Sunday Masses. We encourage you to **pay a visit** to honor the saints and perhaps **light a candle** in honor of a deceased loved one or for a special intention. The shrines are blocked off during Mass, but please feel free to visit afterwards, gazing at the statues and beautiful stained-glass windows.
- We are in need of additional Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. I invite lay **men and women** (age 18 and up) to consider this service to the parish. Training is provided.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,  
Rector

See photos on next page







CRAIG DAN GOSEYUN  
b. 1960  
American, San Carlos Apache  
APACHE MOUNTAIN  
SPIRIT DANCER,  
GAHN DANCER II 1993  
Bronze

