**The Inner Secret Garden**

 **When Jesus walked out of the wilderness, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. I always ponder the words in the Gospel lessons for a few days before I write a sermon. With today’s lesson I wondered what does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit. For me being filled with the Holy Spirit suggests a fullness of our souls. There are many ways we can fill up our souls and here are some of them. We can have a sense of contentment in our lives, rather than dissatisfaction or discouragement with what we do or don’t do, or what we have or don’t have. We can have a sense of inner peace, a knowing we don’t have to look outward at all the goodies others might require to fill their inner lives. We can reach toward a sense of inner happiness when we simply experience the sun is shining, rather than not even noticing the day.**

 **We in this room are all privileged because we can choose to fill our souls with all the everyday simple blessings surrounding us. I can’t imagine what it would be like to be in a refugee camp, with little food and very little hope. Neither can I imagine what it would be like to be living in Flint Michigan right now, wondering if my children would have permanent health issues because of terrible water. No matter what we think we don’t have or what our problems may be, we are the lucky ones. We have the time to contemplate how we can better fill our souls with the blessings from the Holy Spirit.**

 **“The Secret Garden” is supposed to be a children’s’ book. It’s an old book written by Frances Hodgson Burnett** **in 1909**. **But it doesn’t matter how old the book is, it has many universal truths concerning the power of love. The themes of the book are love and devotion and they have the ability to show us how we can make all things whole and full of the Holy Spirit. The story for me has always been an allegory about the effort and devotion it takes to fill our souls with the Holy Spirit. The story begins with two lonely children, one whose body is weak and one whose soul is damaged. Both children are suffering from a lack of love. The girl in the story, Mary, finds a secret neglected garden. She begins working to bring the garden back to life. With the help of a young boy. who loves all things in nature, she brings the garden back to life. Reviving not only the garden, but also bringing the weakened boy’s body back to health and filling his and Mary’s souls up to the brim. One of the quotations from this book is, “If you look the right way, you can see that the whole world is a garden.”**

 **The garden nurtured back to life by these children brought unintended consequences. Unlike some unintended negative consequences, these brought renewal and life and added wonder to the children’s garden. The birds returned to the garden because they had some place to be and sit and sing in the renewed trees. Small animals moved back into the garden and raised their next generation. The smell of sweet flowers filled the air and the bees came to the garden to drink the nectar and pollinate other flowers. As the children were healed so was the garden as it came back to life and offered life to small animals and birds. Life is an interconnected circle, and we might as well spend our time on earth bringing joy and hope to all those around us. We may not be able to make the whole world a garden. We may not have the time or the space or the physical capacity to create a garden. Yet the one thing all of us can do is to make a conscious decision to grow a better interior garden in our souls.**

 **As we walk through our journey here on earth, we can make a decision to fill our souls with the Holy Spirit. Just as the Secret Garden became a place of life-giving love, our souls can grow into the fullness of the Holy Spirit by constant devotion and care. If we choose to have our souls filled with more of the Holy Spirit, it does take effort. Just as the children worked on their secret garden until it was beautiful, we can choose to make our souls into a more perfect garden where the Holy Spirit can shine forth. Growing beautiful gardens is work and growing beautiful souls also takes work and devotion. Yet we the privileged ones in this world have all we need to become filled with the Holy Spirit. We’re not in the middle of wars, or living in a refugee camp or forced to worry about our children because of tainted water. We have the space and the time to become more perfect channels for the Holy Spirit to flow through us.**

 **This is the beginning of Lent, and it’s a perfect time to start a more conscious involvement in this business of filling our souls with the Holy Spirit. If you devote even as little as ten minutes a day to filling your soul more, your soul will grow and became a better instrument for love, pardon, unity, faith, hope, light and joy. These are qualities prayed for in the Prayer of St. Francis. One of the ways we can spend our ten minutes on helping our soul be filled the Holy Spirit is by reciting this beautiful prayer every day until we know it by heart and it becomes part of us. It you haven’t picked up a Lenten Living Compass booklet please take one with you today. These booklets are in the entry way and there is one for each of us. The booklet offers meditations and readings to help turn the Lenten experience into a time for inner growth. There are also many different kinds of books on Spirituality to read. For instance, you might consider purchasing a book on Celtic Spirituality, an early Christian tradition in England. Our Book of Common Prayer offers all kinds of beautiful prayers to help guide us on our spiritual way to filling our souls. There are an endless variety of ways to help fill our souls more with the Holy Spirit. Choose anyone of the many paths, and see how much it can help fill each of our souls. Amen**