SALSA: ONE MARVELOUS METAPHOR

This year has been a great one for garden produce. Peppers, zuchs, peas, and tomatoes in abundance, thanks to those hot summer days. So... I've been making salsa. I cut up all the ingredients by hand (labor of love) and it becomes a wonderfully flavorful mixture suitable for enhancing eggs, meat, soups, pasta, and of course any kind of Mexican food. So adaptable!



But what if it could be more?

Most of you know by now that my mind can work in "mysterious ways". So please try to walk with me on this. What if... the ingredients for salsa somehow pointed to *the elements of a healthy spiritual life*? Impossible you say? Okay, so here we go!

- The **tomatoes** remind us of the blood that was spilled by Jesus on the cross signifying a love that would stop at nothing to give us "life of the ages".
- **Peppers** remind us to be "spicy" influencers for good wherever we find ourselves.
- With lots of vitamin C, **garlic** brings to mind our role in protecting our local bodies (family, community, state, nation...) from unhealthy influences.
- **Lemon juice** can focus our attention on how we are to experience the "sour" places in life with patience and grace.
- The major ingredient of **bouillon** is *salt* which comes up in Jesus' invitation to be the "salt of the earth" to both preserve what is good and enhance it to be more flavorful.
- Among other things, **cilantro** promotes cardiovascular health which reminds us to take care of our (metaphorical) heart, the deepest part of who we are.
- There are a few **mystery ingredients** that I will keep to myself... So sometimes it's not about knowing more but experiencing the mystery of life more profoundly.
- And then, of course, there are the tortilla chips. They are, well, just chips.

Does this seem a bit farfetched to you? Okay, maybe my imagination goes a bit crazy at times. But our outside world is constantly "speaking" to our inside world about what we need to be about, the stuff that is most important. I've heard many stories where something in nature has brought them into a deeper experience of God. Maybe you have a story of your own (I'd love to hear it!).

Just the other day, I was admiring that big, old pine tree that towers over the other trees on the southern edge of our Church's and the Township Hall's parking lot. That is one massive tree. And my mind jumps to scenes of the Lord of the Rings movie featuring those ancient trees called the Ents. They move veeeeeeeeeerrrrrrryyyyyy sssslllllloooowwwwllllyyy yet possess a profound wisdom honed by countless years of patient endurance. I am moved by trees that

have been around for a very long time. Have you ever looked at a stump where the yearly rings are clearly visible? The "fat", prosperous years present as rings spaced farther apart, indicating vigorous growth. The "lean", difficulty years are seen as rings close together, low growth and conservation of energy. In California, I was able to see this in both the giant sequoias and redwoods. Truly amazing.

My takeaway is the whisper of an invitation to abide in a deep wisdom that guides me through the "fat" <u>and</u> the "lean" times. This is the wisdom that moves beyond my small ego-based sensibilities into a larger appreciation of the Big Picture (freely supplied by the Holy Spirit). I am also invited into learning a *patience* that helps me stay the course through stormy circumstances of life. And not just stay on course, but to stay the course with a joy and confidence and personal strength. So whenever I am in the parking lot and catch a glimpse of the pine giant, I am reminded of Jesus' invitation to grow in patience and deep wisdom.

Wow, all this deep talk is making me hungry! I'm off to savor some chips and salsa!

Scott