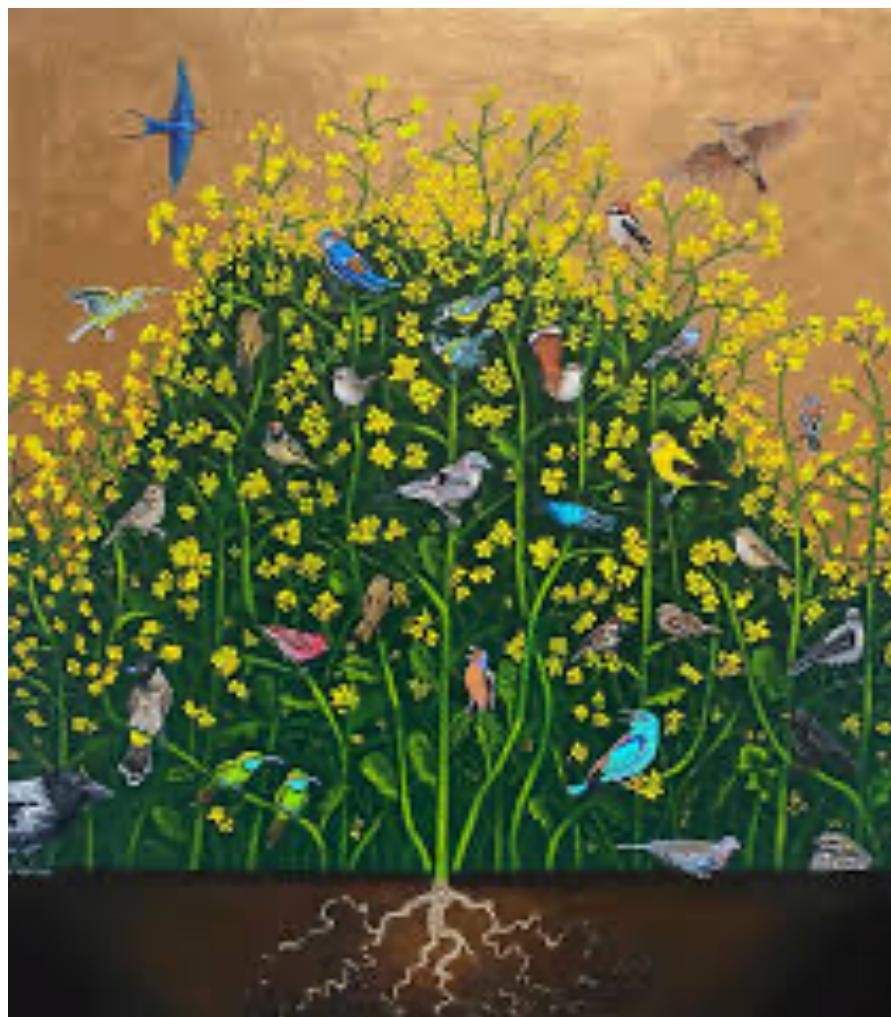


Silent Reflections

Tuesday 27 January 2026

The Smallest Seed



He [Jesus] told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.” (Matthew 13:31-32).

INTRODUCTION

A tiny seed, very ordinary, insignificant, and yet so much can be achieved by the smallest, simplest thing: the giving and receiving of a humble gift given in gratitude or made with love.



How often do we fail to take notice of the small things that surround us in our daily lives that could make all the difference to our well-being and to that of others. How often can our lives be eased, our spirits lifted, by a shared smile of greeting or understanding, a recognition of a feeling, a touch, or a letting be, a helping hand, a presence, a kindness,

an unexpected glimpse of something beautiful...



RESOURCES

Below are some words of wisdom, some shared experiences, some poems, all focused on *small things* for us to reflect on. Hopefully, they will help to stimulate your thoughts in this present moment, as well as recall memories of past experiences, which in some cases may have changed your life, or made life bearable at a time of acute pain and vulnerability:

Father Matthew Spencer (OSJ) says:

How often we look for extraordinary experiences. How often we cry out to God for some immediate, quick fix to our problems. For divine intervention that is magnificent and out of this world, and beyond our ordinary experience. When, in fact, God can work through the ordinary experiences of our lives. In fact, more often than not, God is inviting us to discover him in the small moments of our lives. In the relationships he has allowed, in the joys and the sorrows that we experience, in the sufferings and trials, as well as the blessings that he pours down upon our lives. Rather than seek out something extraordinary, work to be obedient even when it seems too simple. Even when it seems too ordinary. Like St. Joseph, be content if God is revealing things to us in more subtle ways, if God is revealing them to us through ordinary circumstances. No matter the case, be obedient in all circumstances.

Recently, I listened to the URC minister **Nadia Bolz-Weber** sharing an experience she had once on a flight. She and her husband were travelling just after her nephew had been shot and killed. She couldn't stop herself crying and sobbed for the whole of the journey, trying to make herself invisible behind her arm. When the plane touched down, a woman nearby handed over a packet of tissues. Nadia took them without making eye contact and it was left to her husband to say "Thank you", and to add, "she's grieving." "I thought so", said the woman and moved off. Nadia recalls that it was such a little thing but to her it was an act of epic compassion and she never forgot it and it planted something in her. Later on, she herself, handed over some tissues to another passenger sobbing on a delayed plane. The woman shared that she might be missing a funeral and they began to talk and shared many things.



Nadia mused afterwards about what God could do with Kleenex! Something so small that a child can carry it around in their pocket. She said she suspects that *the Spirit prefers nudges to grand gestures.*

Saint Francis de Sales writes that *there is nothing small in the service of God and* **Teresa of Calcutta** says that *We can do no great things, only small things with great love*, and in her book of thoughts: *On Greater Love*, she writes about the commandment to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul and mind:

This is the command of our great God, and He cannot command the impossible. Love is a fruit, in season at all times and within reach of every hand. Anyone may gather it and no limit is set. Everyone can reach this love through meditation, the spirit of prayer, and sacrifice, by an intense interior life. Do not think that love, in order to be genuine, has to be extraordinary.



What we need is to love without getting tired. How does a lamp burn? Through the continuous input of small drops of oil. What are these drops of oil in our lamps? They are the small things of daily life: faithfulness, small words of kindness, a thought for others, our way of being silent, of looking, of speaking, and of acting. Do not look for Jesus away from yourselves. He is not out there; He is in you. Keep your lamp burning, and you will recognize Him.

Richard Holloway writes in his book, *Paradoxes of Christian Faith and Life*:

Not for us the way of magnificent sacrifice; but there is still left the way of small sacrifices. Giving our life to him [Christ] bit by tiny bit. A bit more of our money. A bit more of our time in costly prayer. A bit more of our heart as we find small ways of loving him in others. And slowly we'll learn to give ourselves away. And maybe one day, when we are old, we'll discover that we have, after all, given all our riches away and with relief we'll run at last into the kingdom of heaven.

We are familiar with **Julian of Norwich's** words in the *Divine Revelations*:

And in this vision he showed me a little thing, the size of a hazel-nut, lying in the palm of my hand, and to my mind's eye it was round as any ball. I looked at it and thought, "What can this be?" And the answer came to me, "It is all that is made." I wondered how it would last, for it was so small I thought it might suddenly disappear. And the answer in my mind was, "It lasts and will last forever because God loves it; and in the same way everything exists through the love of God." In this little thing I saw three attributes: the first is that God made it, the second is that he loves it, the third is that God cares for it.

Sister Margaret Ormand, one-time co-ordinator for Dominican Sisters International, visiting the people living on a rubbish tip outside San Salvador, reported a very small act of attentive kindness that changed her life:

When I saw the garbage site where the people lived, I was overcome by tears. I tried to hide my tears and just catch my breath so that I could carry on without much notice. But, a little girl, who was probably about six, saw me crying. She reached up, waved a hand to call me down to where she could touch me and she wiped away my tears. She showed me compassion in a way that was transforming because after that I knew I had to move beyond my backyard. She was the one who led me to discover my international vocation.

Safety Net by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

*This morning I woke
thinking of all the people I love
and all the people they love
and how big the net
of lovers. It felt so clear,
all those invisible ties
interwoven like silken threads
strong enough to make a mesh
that for thousands of years
has been woven and rewoven
to catch us all.
Sometimes we go on
as if we forget
about it. Believing only
in the fall. But the net
is just as real. Every day,
with every small kindness,
with every generous act,
we strengthen it. Notice,
even now, how
as the whole world
seems to be falling, it
is there for us as we
walk the day's tightrope,
how every tie matters.*

POINTS TO PONDER:

- In Mary Oliver's poem *The Kingfisher*, there comes the line: *how could there be a day in your whole life that doesn't have its splash of happiness?* Perhaps you are inclined to contest that, but perhaps we don't see because we don't always attend. Think back over the last day or two. Was there something, maybe very small and ordinary, sent to help that you have perhaps overlooked till now?
- Could it be a new start (or restart) in 2026 to ask the Spirit at the end of each day (or week) to remind you of any unacknowledged gift you may have received, and to give thanks for it.
- Mother Teresa speaks of *the small things of daily life* as drops of oil keeping our lamp burning. If you find this a helpful image, reflect on how this might this work in your own life.
- The author, Mark Nepo, says that: *Sometimes it is the smallest gesture that speaks more than all the sermons in the world.* How does that strike you?
- If any word, or image in the above resources arrests you, then stay with it until you understand what God is saying to you. It may help to talk it over with a spiritual director or soul friend.

BLESSING

Beloved is where we begin

...

*I cannot promise
this blessing will free you
from danger,
from fear,
from hunger
or thirst,
from the scorching
of sun
or the fall
of the night.*

*But I can tell you
that on this path
there will be help.*

*I can tell you
that on this way
there will be rest.*

*I can tell you
that you will know
the strange graces
that come to our aid
only on a road
such as this,
that fly to meet us
bearing comfort
and strength,
that come alongside us
for no other cause
than to lean themselves
toward our ear
and with their curious insistence
whisper our name:*

*Beloved.
Beloved.
Beloved.*

By Jan Richardson

