

Extracted from St John Vianney October 10, 2010 Bulletin

Fall by Carl Beyer

Oh, glorious fall is upon us. Time to reap the rewards of all our hard work during spring and summer; time to reflect on what we have done well and what we would like to do better next year; but it is not time to rest yet, because we need to process all the food from the garden. By late fall we will have time to look around at all our canned goods and know we will be fed over the winter.

OK! I know I just lost the majority of city slickers who look at the grocery store as their winter supplies. True enough, and mostly true for myself as well. But I can dream and I can put a small dent in those grocery bills. Oh, how sweet that food we grow ourselves tastes. What a sense of security it gives to look at those shelves of preserved food.

The kids and I have made our batch of salsa for the year. I believe it was around sixteen pints and eight quarts. It is not as hot as last year, but made from my secret recipe, which I am willing to share. The first step is to go out in the garden and gather all the chilies, bell peppers and tomatoes you can find. I cheated and used the onions I had frozen from last year's crop. Next, boil and skin the tomatoes. Now comes the fun part: gutting and chopping all the bell peppers and chilies. Better plan on gutting and chopping all day, or even all weekend. Put this all in a pot and cook. Personally, I just start cooking with the tomatoes and keep adding veggies. I throw in a box of brown sugar for sweetness and a little cilantro for flavor. So really I am not the chef of my secret recipe because I just take the bounty that God gives me from the garden and throw it all together. This way, no two years of salsa are alike. It keeps life interesting.

My crop of tomatoes was quite poor this year, but there were enough tomatoes for our salsa though I would have preferred more tomatoes. Actually, I am not sure if the crop was poor or if my Rottweiler has become a better harvester. She loves those tomatoes. I was able to get about half the pepper and chili plants from plants I started inside the house in early spring. But I was short, so our local Lowes supplied the rest of the plants. After canning over one hundred pints of carrots last year we planted fewer carrots this year. The good news is Great-Grandma likes the carrots and we are happy to give them to her. This year I want to take the carrots, potatoes, peas and onions and can some nice chicken soup. I am not sure about the potatoes though because they do not have the big tops they had last year. But, until I dig the crop, the harvest will be unknown.

The beets are ready for both straight beets and pickled beets so I will need to do that soon. The strawberries, after the first crop, have done nothing this year except grow their greens. Our vine plants were a complete bust. No squash, no pumpkins, no watermelons, no cucumbers. Nothing! We are working on a new garden space for them next year. Anything will be an improvement. Our grapes are plentiful and I need to rescue them from the birds soon. I am not sure but I may make some grape jam. The horse radishes are getting big but I think I will give them another year before I thin them out.

Yes, fall is the time to reap the rewards and dream of even bigger rewards in years to come. We have apples but I am hoping with their maturity, next year there will be enough for homemade applesauce. I thought this year was going to be the great strawberry harvest but I will have to

dream that next year will be. With the new garden addition I hope to make our own pickles. And, for the tomato plants next year, a fence. Do not go telling my Rottweiler because I do not want her to feel sad. I will reach over the fence and give her a treat but her salad bar will be closed. I will plan on starting more new chilies inside this spring so hopefully none from Lowes will be needed. As for the grapes, I am going to expand them to several openings in the wall.

Symbolically, for those without gardens, now is the time to look around and see all the rewards you have in your life. Rewards that you have nourish and loved. It is time to look at those failures as an opportunity to create greatness from the knowledge of failure; time to plan on expanding on our successes for even greater rewards; and time to know that God loves you and knows the greatness in you.

Go forth and revel in your rewards. Personally, my greatest rewards are my children and grandchild. Take time in the coolness of fall to enjoy time with family, and in doing so, know you are spending time with God. God Bless you all.