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I Promise You A Rose Garden by Carl E Beyer and Friends

Lynn Anderson lyrics, “I NEVER promised you a rose garden,” along with hearing of another young person trying to end their life got me of thinking. I believe I can promise you a Rose Garden.

First, I believe I can literally say I HAVE a Rose Garden. I have not done a count but I must have over twenty rose bushes around our property. I have red roses, white roses, pink roses, orange roses, yellow roses, candy cane roses, climbing roses, miniature rose and blue roses on order for spring planting. These roses fall in line of: “working roses”, “beauty roses”, “welcoming roses” and “commemorative roses”.

How many of you have working roses? Yes, I put my roses to work, as they need to earn their keep. Upon moving into our home I found the favorite activity of my eighty-pound border collie was to bounce off the dividing wall between our property and our neighbor’s. I do not believe there is any mortar left in that wall. So, a line of roses went in to keep the dog off the wall and also keep a neighbor happy, while giving us some privacy and something much more beautiful to view than a cinderblock wall.

Well, the beauty roses are just about all of them because who does not like roses? When they are in their full bloom, showing off their glory, you wish they could stay that way always.

The welcoming roses are planted by the front door to welcome people to our home. Roses by the entrance to our home lets folks coming to the front door know that the people inside appreciate the beauty of the world. It lets people know that this home, as evidence by the very roses outside, have taken the time to beautify the community.

Commemorative roses? Well, there is the John F. Kennedy roses but more valuable are the John Paul II pure white rose. John Paul II roses bushes struggle every year such is the purity of white. But each year they are a little bigger and gain a little more in the battle to grow. Then they glorify themselves by producing those rare, pure white roses.

So, how in the world do these roses teach us about why we ought not “off” ourselves? Let me reiterate. I do promise you a rose garden but with a catch. There will be pain, hard work, dark times, joyful times, artistic times, restful times, rewarding times and dying times.

Yes, my very first promise with the rose garden is that there will be pain, along with some bloodshed. All true roses have thorns and I shed blood to these roses every year. I suppose I could take the proper protection and be extremely careful not to shed blood but what bloody fun would that be? Those roses give me beauty and pain. The pain is simply a price to be paid.

Hard work is a given. Anything worth having requires hard work. Roses take effort. Roses need maintenance to bring out their beauty. Spring starts with pruning the roses. Pruning stimulates growth, while giving you some control over their growth. They can grow like weeds at times! And, here in the desert, we need to maintain their irrigation. I am not sure if it is just me but those

irrigation lines needs to be checked regularly to ensure each rose is getting its fair share of water. One must be sure and fertilize them to keep them growing strong and proud. Yes, hard work, but very enjoyable work.

Dark times are a given during the winter months when the roses are resting. There seems to be no hope for spring during those long cold winter nights. Dark times also occur when you give all you have and the rose bush just does not want to grow and give you its blossoms. But dark times are just that and will pass. Hang in there and this too shall pass.

Joyful times are so numerous. Now, do not think I mean skipping through the roses and laughing uncontrollably, which would be quite bloody. No, joyful times are the deep joy one gets upon seeing the beauty of God's creation that you helped along the way. That joy that one feels upon accomplishing something that maybe many could have accomplished but in this instance you, in collaboration with The Creator, own this accomplishment.

Artistic times are not really my strongpoint but I try. For instance, things like not planting all red roses together but rather to stagger the different color roses. To some degree we are all artistic. But, may you "artistic" types go wild with the "roses" in your lives.

Restful times are when nothing needs to be done, only to sit down and enjoy the beauty of what you have, in your limited contribution, helped accomplish. God rested and so should you. Rest is good for the soul after all your hard work.

Rewarding times are a constant. They occur during ALL of the previously described times. Be sure and reap those rewards. Stop and count your rewards. Stop and smell the roses. Do not make yourself so busy that rewards are not reaped. Rewards give us strength to continue on.

While the dying times are sad, they are part of the cycle of life. Roses will die and new ones need to be planted. Most often it is just a stem or two that will die which I like to think of as a sacrifice for the greater good of the rest of the plant.

So, after all the words above, how can we relate our Rose Garden to the cycle of life? To me it is easy. I expect dark times. I expect to work hard. I know these periods can seem too long but just hang in there for the joyful, rewarding, beautiful times. Plow through and know a brighter day will come. And when the brighter day comes, enjoy the heck out of it, because dark days will come again.

And most of all, remember. God wants us to live life through all its good and bad times so we can cultivate our soul. So that upon meeting our Lord, we can say we did our best, we spread joy in the world, we spread beauty. Along the way it was darn right bloody at times but the struggles only make the good times seem all the sweeter.

God Bless you all. Go forth and plant your rose garden. Go forth and remind those struggling for meaning in their life how sweet the gift of life truly is.