

28 April 2020
Pastoral Nature Notes
Father Joseph Backowski

Magnificent Easter Grass!

My favorite grass is corn. Yes, if you didn't know corn is a grass! It shares the same family as that short green stuff in your lawn; Poaceae. Hard to believe that these two grasses are cousins given the difference in size and the difference in seed production! Corn is a fascinating grass. It was developed over four thousand years ago by the Native Americans who had bred some two hundred varieties across North America for their particular climates. They would also trade varieties with each other to see how they would do. Two of my favorites are Hopi Blue Corn and Osage Chocolate Corn. Starting as just a small seed, and one tiny whorled blade emerging from the soil this plant seems like a nobody. However, it grows slowly and then when it gets hot and humid the corn grows like crazy. In fact, on a calm humid night if you sit next to a quiet corn field you can listen to it speak as it grows! Corn is so highly productive and can grow so fast because when it gets hot it operates on what us botanists call a C4 system. Most plants produce their food on what we call a C3 system and the corn uses this too. But when it warms up the corn flips to C4 and ramps up energy production! To help you understand it is like a transmission in a car; all our cars today have overdrive. The C4 system is overdrive fast effect production. Most plants just have "Drive" for their transmission so to speak. Corn gets a bad rap from many environmentalist types. Yet it is an incredible efficient crop and so extremely productive! Corn really reveals God's great generosity towards us. We say each time we say the Lord's prayer "Give us this day our daily bread." Well, in Asia and Europe before the discovery of the Americas people, they did not have corn. The primary crop was wheat. In the scriptures it refers to corn, but this same word was used for corns smaller cousin wheat in those times. Corn can be up to 150% more productive than wheat on the same piece of ground. Our Lord would never have eaten corn in his earthly life! If God had become a man in Jesus in a native American Tribe well the Our Father might look more like, Give us this day our daily tortilla. I am not trying to change revelation here but look and see the great gift we have in this tall funny grass! Corn has two flowers! Yes, flowers! The male flower is the tassel the female flower the silking ear. Corn is pollinated when the wind blows and the pollen from the tassel falls to the silk of the ear.

The great grass which feed us is a symbol of the Incarnation of Jesus in Luke chapter 2. When the Angel comes from God the Father who is like the tassel to Mary who is like the ear. The breath and wind of the Holy Spirit from the Father overshadows Mary. Like the wind bring the pollen to the silk of the ear. Jesus, God made man begins to grow in the perfect silk of the womb of the Virgin Mary! Wow what production! This goes beyond 200 bushel and acre! This is an eternal yield a yield that will feed us with the bread of heaven and make us fit for heaven. It is no accident then that during the season of Easter we plant these little kernels which will not only nourish us with tortillas, beef, corn bread, and sweet corn, but will also remind us of Gods great generosity in Sending his spirit on Mary to bring us himself so that he could make of us an eternal yield for heaven! Happy Easter!