

### **This is For the Birds!**

I've wanted a bird feeder for as long as I've lived in my current home, over 14 years. I love waking to the sound of birdsongs when I have the window open and throughout the day. I've had feeders in various places I've lived and they always fall prey to, among other things, my personal nemeses: squirrels! My late husband was successful in foiling their attempts but it hasn't been possible to duplicate his method here. Of course I've thrown birdseed around the yard and the squirrels eat it faster than the birds. I threw some out on the hard crust of snow a couple of years ago and the resulting tracks looked more like an all-out battle had taken place instead of a peaceful feeding I intended. The few birds that could get in left after the several squirrels aggressively took over.

It had been a while since I thought about feeding the birds when I was reminded this past summer by articles and news reports of the rapidly diminishing population of birds across the world, including extinction of many species here in the US. Habitat loss, cell towers, household bug spray, lawn and garden chemicals, etc., all contribute and one of the most dangerous is feral and domestic cats who kill as many as a *billion* birds every year (please keep Fluffy inside!). I began to think of feeders again and in finding one that has perches on all sides with feeding windows that close with the weight of a squirrel, I bought two. I found the right size double plant hanger pole, filled them with seed and waited, and waited, and waited. I scattered some birdseed on a back area of my driveway to attract attention. The squirrels, of course, were all over it. FINALLY, two days later, it was if the sky was raining birds! Finches, sparrows, blue jays, lady cardinals, and more. Watching them reminded me of the words of the late Thomas Merton, monk, mystic, author who wrote:

*The first chirps of the waking birds mark the "point vierge" [the virgin point] of the day under a sky as yet without real light, a moment of awe and inexpressible innocence, when the Father in perfect silence opens their eyes. They speak to him, not with fluent song, but with an opening question that is their dawn state...Their condition asks if it is time for them to "be." He answers, "Yes." Then, they one by one wake up and become birds...beginning to sing. Presently they will be fully themselves, and will even fly.*

My heart smiles as my small offering to one small part of God's Creation, of which I am also a very small part, is well received. And yes, the squirrels are enjoying parts of it, too, and larger birds share the driveway feed. It is a reminder that each morning when we wake we, too, are given another moment in time to "be" again. It is a *virgin point*, a *moment of awe* and even *innocence* to prayerfully consider how I will *become* human this day, as a benefit, a service, a ministry as a follower of Jesus, to "all creatures great and small," along with my fellow humans, of course. For this moment, I will "be" happy to look out my window again to see who visits me today. Wake well in your tomorrow!

*[Jesus said] A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ~ Matthew 13:4-5*

*You make springs gush forth in the valleys...the wild donkeys quench their thirst. Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches. ~ Psalm 104:10a, 11b,12*

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