

Friday night as I was watering my garden, I thought back some years to when there was no garden there. The ground was clay that baked hard as concrete in the July sun. Only weeds grew there, mostly kosa, and some wiry grasses. One day I asked Larry Luger to till it, Bob Mundahl to bring in two loads of manure and my garden was begun.

That first year little would grow. The clay still baked hard, choking the beans and the peas and raspberries I had planted there. When fall came I gathered leaves, and many of you brought leaves by and dumped them there, And then I tilled and tilled until the leaves and the soil were mixed. The following summer I had a wonderful garden, a bumper crop. I had defeated that clay, the battle was won.

That fall I relaxed, played golf and went fishing for I was sure that my garden was just as I wanted it to be. And the following summer brought a disaster. The ground was hard again, choking my beans and peas.

By now I have learned that with that garden I just can't relax. Left to itself it ~~will~~ will harden into a patch ~~that~~ that will grow only weeds.

But Friday night as I looked over the potatoes so green and healthy, and the corn standing so tall, the cucumbers and squash and lettuce and peas I thought of none of that. I only thought of what had been before I began, and what was now, and I felt very proud. I had made something out of nothing, sort of like God.

Creatio ex Nihilo. Those of you who know Latin as I do not hopefully would recognize what I am trying to say, creation out of nothing. That is the work of God. In the beginning when there was nothing but God, God created. Creatio ex Nihilo.

And when Jesus was dead following ~~that~~ Good Friday, God gave him life, brought him into being once more. That is what the resurrection of the dead is, a creation out of nothing, creatio ex Nihilo.

So too that is what God does in baptism. He puts to death the Old Adam

in us and brings forth a being that never was, a new person, a new ~~you~~ you.  
Creatio ex Nihilo.

What God does with you and I is like what happened with my garden.  
~~We begin with there is nothing but weeds.~~ We are born into this world a  
patch of ~~weeds~~ soil that will grow nothing but weeds. Left to ourselves  
these are the weeds that grow up: Fornication, impurity, licentiousness,  
idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension,  
party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like. Now of course this  
is only a partial list of the weeds. To have listed them all St. Paul would  
have needed to catalogue every sin that we commit. But this list is enough  
for us to see some of the weeds growing in the garden that is you and I. These  
are the works of the flesh, what the descendants of Adam make of ourselves  
and do.

Now when God looked upon us and first claimed us for his garden in  
baptism, he had quite a different group of plants and flowers in mind. ~~When~~  
~~these works of the flesh.~~ He intended <sup>to</sup> a garden bountifully producing  
fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithful-  
ness, gentleness, self-control. Out of nothing he intended <sup>to</sup> to make of us  
the garden he has always dreamed we would be. His beautiful and perfect  
creation.

But that job isn't done. This day, each of us, are a garden with some  
good plants seeking to bear fruit, and weeds, taking up the moisture,  
grasping in the nutrients, threatening to choke off all that is good. Without  
constant care and attention the soil grows hard and all the ~~weeds~~ go to  
seed and all that is good will wither and die.

Now God creates something out of nothing with his word. In the ~~beginning~~  
beginning God spoke and there was light, God spoke and the <sup>dry land appeared</sup> ~~waters were divided,~~  
God spoke and there were fish and birds and animals. God spoke and humans  
were created.

So now also God speaks through his word and he creates faith in hearts



where there was no faith, Through his word that is preached he brings forth the plant called hope where there had been before only the weed named despair, When your garden is watered with God's Word, then that word that is preached brings forth the blossom called love out of the patch that had been before only selfishness. Creatio Ex Nihilo.

So too God takes his word and wraps it up in the water of baptism, and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper to plant peace where before had only grown guilt and fear. When we hear God's word each week, when we are nourished by the sacrament God tills the garden with faith, and love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self control, <sup>with the plants that spring up,</sup> ~~are born~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ And the weeds of fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness and carousing are rooted up more and more. This is God's work, his creation out of nothing.

Our work is simply this. To hear God's word and receive the sacrament. We cannot expect God to bring forth good plants from a garden that is not cared for. He commands, he demands that you hear his word each week. He will make a new you through it.

One day God will stand where I stood last Friday night. He will look over you and me to see what his work in us has produced. Think of his joy to see an abundant harvest of fruit that he has created out of nothing.