

Perfect Imperfections

Sue Self, LCSW

There is a tree not far from my home. It stands tall and straight, and right now is ablaze with color. It is the most amazing yellow, the kind of yellow you colored with in kindergarten. And when the light is just right, it actually seems to glow. That tree is, simply put, spectacular.

There are a number of ways this metaphor can fail me, but bear with me. This tree brings to my mind our community at Sts. Clare & Francis.

Not only does its perfection bring it to mind; it, like us, is beautiful. It's sturdy and stands tall, but sways in the wind, with no thought of falling to the ground. And certainly, when the Sun is shining on us, SC&F can be glowing. Perfectly.

On a walk this week, I was wading through its fallen leaves, thinking about this idea. I decided to save some of its leaves, maybe press them, or find a way to preserve this awesome color. So I began to search for its most perfect representatives.

I couldn't find any. I looked for some time, but each and every leaf had some flaw, some blemish, was misshapen, or torn, or wasn't truly yellow throughout. Some were greenish, some a bit of red coming through, not one was my kindergarten yellow. Close up, my tree seemed less than perfect all of a sudden. Far less.

Hmmm. There went my metaphor. And then it dawned on me that the metaphor still worked. Like the tree, each and every last one of us is faulted, damaged, broken. And we all have some truer, deeper colors that don't always surface for everyone to see. We are together as a community, and what emerges is akin to that wondrous tree.

So I kept picking up leaves, thinking about this idea, which I have to say, I found very satisfying, and thought it was a good lesson for tolerance-putting up with each other's differences, warts and imperfections. That despite all of those blemishes and hurts, and the all ways we fail sometimes to be who we want to be, we can be one gorgeous tree.

But, I can work a metaphor to death, particularly if left on my own. I started thinking about what the tree (and SC&F!) would look like if, in fact, each leaf was perfect; true in color, and without flaw or scar. Here's what dawned on me next. This community, just like this tree, is a wondrous thing because of its varying colors, and because of its torn parts and misshapes. Not in spite of them. The tree has its depth and intensity of color because each leaf is different. And each one of us is needed to create our complexity, strength and wisdom.

To borrow from a recent song, our 'perfect imperfections' are needed, not just accepted or tolerated. *Required.*

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