

# DAILY BREAD

## “Grain of Hope : Slice of Heaven”

# EXTRAORDINARY

### Green Wheat

Growing its life before the violent harvest,  
the green ear of wheat  
sways with the wind.

After the struggle  
of seed-self in heavy earth, it dances  
light.

Massed, it turns the land into a sea  
of rippling green; it turns a ray of sun  
to a silky shimmer.

Years after a birth  
that could have been a violent death, a child  
walks through the fields of Nazareth.

In tangled grass  
he sees wild flowers flaring out their selves  
in jewel-brilliance

and the child knows  
these petal-beings which do not strain or  
work  
sing out glory

with a truer voice  
than robed wisdom, crowned kingly power,  
however brief their lives.

The wheat dances  
in the creation-flow; the child breathes  
the delight of sheer being

in God.

In time both wheat and child  
will be offered as bread, but for the moment

each affirms I am.

Diane Pacitti, 2020

Through the long weeks between flowering and maturity each grain slowly develops, hidden away inside its floret, nurtured by a complicated interplay of extraordinary / ordinary processes. As in a mammalian pregnancy, the ebb and flow of hormones is key: successive waves of *cytokinins*, *gibberellin*, *auxin* and *abscisic acid* play roles analogous to oestrogen, progesterone and oxytocin.

By this stage, most of the compounds that go to form the grain already exist in the plant. These are known as assimilates - and have been formed in the leaves through photosynthesis. How the assimilates are distributed matters more than making new compounds from now on. Distribution is strongly influenced by environmental conditions, especially availability of light and water, and is radically altered by disease.

Grains are carbon and nitrogen sinks - from our perspective, we want them to fill up, sucking assimilates from the rest of the plant. In reality, the process is highly plastic, with the plant making nuanced 'decisions' about what is required where. For example, often only 2-4 out of 9 possible florets will develop at all, and the size of each grain can be very variable. This year's soggy June and July will probably mean a lower nitrogen content in the grain, despite the preceding hot, dry Spring. And as our wheat has recently contracted more than one fungal infection it will need to deploy resources to mount a response.

In an ideal world we might expect about half the final mass of the plant to be in the grain, and around 18,000 grains per square metre. We'll see....

God is the web, the energy,  
the space, the light—not  
captured in them, as if  
any of those concepts were more real  
than what unites them—but revealed in  
that singular, vast net of relationship  
that animates everything that is.

Barbara Brown-Taylor

There are two periods of the liturgical year that are called “**Ordinary Time**”! They stitch together the Christmas and Easter cycles; we are currently in the the **Season after Pentecost** sometimes called Trinitytide. The liturgical colour for **Ordinary Time** is green. It is calledis called “ordinary” because the weeks are numbered. The Latin word *ordinalis*, which refers to numbers in a series, stems from the Latin word *ordo*, from which we get the English word order.

Ordinary Time is in fact the ordered life of the Church—the period in which we live our lives neither in feasting (as in the Christmas and Easter seasons) or in penance (as in Advent and Lent), but in watchfulness and expectation... we focus on the life of the Church as it grows in the midst of the world.

