

FIONA DIDN'T TAKE THE STATUES: A REFLECTION



St. Theresa's Garden

As I walked amidst the mess that Fiona left in her wake, through St. Theresa's Garden and Sacred Heart Grove, located on Bethany Property, I felt compelled to write a reflection. I can only imagine what a full-on hurricane would do. I have a deeper sense of empathy for those who have been devastated by these storms.

What compelled me was the fact that not a single statue was touched amidst all the destruction. Surrounded by huge trees lying on their sides, their massive roots exposed leaving equally massive holes, branches strewn all over, St. Therese of Lisieux, Our Lady of Fatima shrine, complete with children and lambs, as well as the Sacred Heart of Jesus, were still standing there, with barely a leaf on them. In Sacred Heart Grove, a Wishing Well once stood opposite the statue of the Sacred Heart. It was flattened, completely destroyed. And there stood the Sacred Heart of Jesus, untouched, his faithful companions with their leafy arms, and sturdy trunks who stood next to him for decades lying down, some still clinging to their neighbours who tried to hold them up, but not for much longer.

What was this saying to me? I reflected on the exposed roots, literally ripped out of the ground, pondered how much deeper I thought they would be. I recalled that I once

learned that trees communicate to one another through their root systems, creating a vibrant, alive, underground community that supports and protects one another. I grieve with them on the loss of these companions. If we believe that this is *Our Common Home* as Pope Francis does in *Laudato Si*, then we have experienced a great deal of loss at the hands of Fiona. Think of the loss of home for the birds, the bugs, the squirrels, and chipmunks, among others.

The rootedness of these statues is very different, they are not planted into the earth as the trees are. Yet they represent a rootedness that grounds my soul to something bigger than me. We are more than stewards of creation; we are part of an integral ecology that includes our social, cultural, and economic needs as well as the environment. These statues represent that part of an integral ecology that speaks to our spiritual needs. The steadfastness that kept them standing must be part of what gives us the resilience to withstand the losses, traumas, and hurts that are part of our life's journey. Perhaps these stalwarts of resilience are still standing to draw our attention to the fact that these climate events will keep happening. They stand to signal to us that we must change the way we live our relationship with all Creation. They stand to



Seabright shrine survived as well ...

remind us that they were once lovingly sheltered and are now exposed to the next storm. Some call these events an act of God. Poor God. We blame God like a petulant child rather than accept responsibility for our own actions that have led to the climate crisis.

The landscape of our property has changed, it is devastating to see. Yet in the aftermath I am grateful to these trees whose absence continues to teach me about the gift of community, and to these statues who teach me resilience and call me to action. I have always loved the poem by Joyce Kilmer. It has come to my mind often these days. I offer it in remembrance and in gratitude of our trees.

~Sr. Joanne O'Regan, CSM

TREES

*I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.*

*A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;*

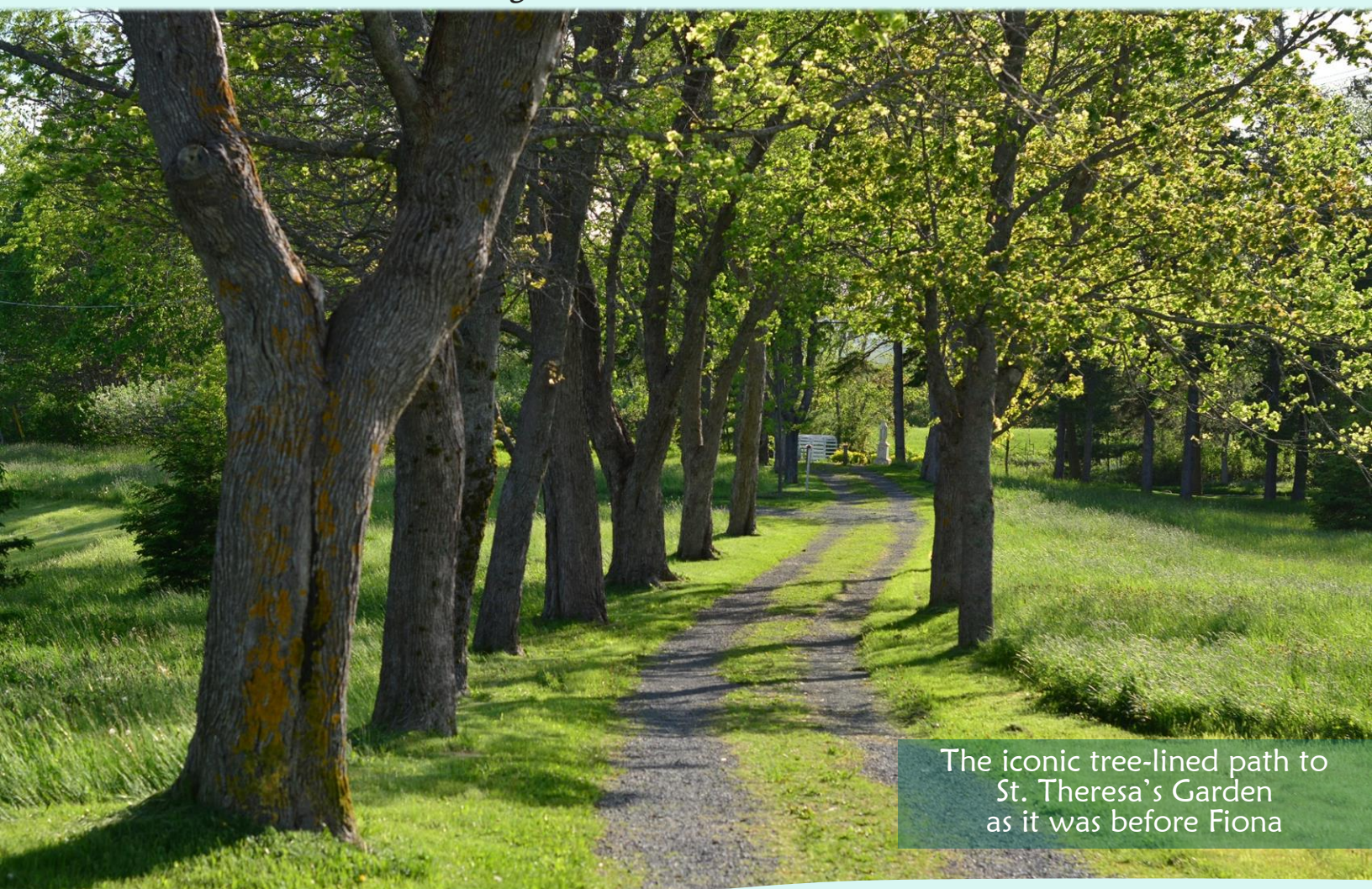
*A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;*

*A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;*

*Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.*

*Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.*

~[JOYCE KILMER](#)



The iconic tree-lined path to St. Theresa's Garden as it was before Fiona