

MUSINGS

by FR. SEÁN ÓLAOIRE, PHD - 2017 VOLUME 1

*The Gravity
of a Scrub Oak*

I

An ancient Scrub Oak
is clinging tenaciously
to the very steep hillside.
Perpendicular to its foothold,
it stretches out
almost horizontally
over the valley far below,
pointing three gnarled limbs
to the West.



They look like three arthritic fingers
curled and knuckled and painful,
as they attempt to push themselves
into a green glove
fashioned of prickly leaves
and stubborn twigs.



The svelte trunk is clothed
in a form-fitting gown of smooth satiny lichen
that sensuously emphasizes every voluptuous curve;
only the arthritic hand reveals its age.





II

Applied Math tells me
that the tree's full weight multiplied
by the distance of its center of gravity
from the hillside
is the force gravity is exerting
to topple it over.

But the roots have dug in,
grabbing hold of earth and rocks;
refusing to give up.

How many years has it done this?
Looking at it, I'd say more than a hundred.

It's a contest;
Each year it grows in bulk and in length
and so the cantilever effect gets stronger.

But each year its root system
becomes more connected to its subterranean home,
and the tree gives gravity a run for its money.

III

Twenty feet farther up the hillside,
a much younger madrona
is leaning out protectively over the oak tree.

It's a good neighbor.

Occasionally a gentle zephyr visits
and invites the Scrub Oak to make music;
then the silent tree bursts into song;
each leaf adding its voice to the chorus.

Even the gnarled-fingered hand
keeps time, gently swaying
to match the rising and falling volume,
as the baton master invites it.

IV

Meanwhile Father Sun
continues to feed it intravenous chlorophyll.
It's like an outdoor Irish pub:
music and laughter and a "drop a' de craytur".
Nature surely knows
how to throw a party!

Namasté,

Seán

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