

Nourishing Vocation Lectionary
Phase 1: Nourishing Personal Vocational Discernment
Section 5: Holy Tending - The Art of Paying Attention

From Ephesians 4:1-6, Luke 1:26-38, John 9, Job 38

We live in an age of distraction, when our phones and other devices notify us constantly of new messages, articles, and advertisements, and when social media companies study the psychology of slot machines in order to make their products more addictive. There are, of course, also ways that technology allows us to be present with one another, rather than pulling us apart; many of us have experienced the sacred attention of another via phone or video call, especially over the past three-plus years of pandemic. But as truly paying attention becomes rarer, its holiness perhaps becomes more obvious—to be truly noticed and held by the mind of another can be a dazzlingly powerful experience. Furthermore, it is worth remembering that attention does not only exist between human beings; we can and should also bestow our attention on the wider world around us, as well as on God’s work in it and in ourselves.

The reading from Ephesians calls us to pay attention to one another, “bearing with one another in love,” because God is “through all and in all.” Meanwhile, the passage from Luke challenges us to pay attention to the presence and action of God in our lives and the lives of those around us. The reading from John calls us to pay attention to what it is we notice; when we see in ordinary ways, we fail to notice what is most important, but when we see through Jesus, our perception is more loving and more accurate. The reading from John also reinforces the calls to pay attention both to God and to one another from the readings from Ephesians and Luke. The passage from Job enumerates the many ways that God is active in nature as a force of both creation and sustenance.

Together these readings call us to tend to where our attention goes and to notice both God’s work in the world and the needs of the other.