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In Season

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In Season

Many fruits and vegetables are seasonal, so that locally grown fresh peaches and corn become available at one time, and cherries and squash at a different time of year. "In season" has little meaning in major urban stores where fresh food is often shipped from one part of the world with a growing season that is different from the places where the fruits and vegetables are sold and consumed. Though many fruits and vegetables taste better when they come fully ripened from neighboring farms and orchards, some of the common varieties can be found all year long in the larger stores served by major transportation networks: everything from avocados to grapes, or asparagus to plums.

Business interests have overcome the ordinary limitations of our growing seasons, so that as shoppers, we can find whatever we might want at any time of year. While we obviously gain a consistent and large selection of fruits and vegetables to eat, we might at the same time lose a sense of appreciation for those food items that were formerly only available at certain times of year, and also lose some of our awareness of the effects of weather and seasons upon the lands where food is grown. We might eventually lose all our connections with those who plant and harvest our food. For humans, convenience is not the only measure of quality of life.

Liturgical seasons are also affected by commerce: we are well aware of the effects upon our sense of Christmas and Easter seasons by the constant implication in advertising media that both events have no significance beyond giving and receiving gifts or celebrating the arrival of spring. But Advent and Lent that precede Christmas and Easter, and the two feasts themselves, are reminders and occasions for experiences of God's love for us and also of our response to that love by our love for one another. As a season, Christmas invites us not only to care for family, friends, and colleagues, but also for some of those whose needs we meet so that they might experience their dignity as fellow members of the human family. Easter season reminds us of how much more there is to life than what we can access with our physical senses, and that death is not the end, but a new beginning. The season of Pentecost, or "the season of The Spirit" during the rest of the year, is not touched by money-making enterprises, probably because the reality of inspiration is both wholly universal and at the same time beyond our control.

Seasons of grace are still another very important reality that is beyond our jurisdiction. Yet our response of acceptance and our attitude of expectation have direct correspondence with the depth of the experiences we can have. One person might find that his or her personal manner of praying may

somehow no longer bring satisfaction, which is often a sign, not of fault or failure, but that another season is ready to begin, another period of growth, with a different kind of "fruit" that will bring a new sense of peace and fulfillment. God is in charge of these seasons of grace. We have only to observe and respond to receive the fruits, which will ripen with our cooperation. Each of us has some unique seasons of particular growth, often at times of specific challenges. The same Spirit of life-giving change and development also brings about some seasonal variations that are shared, as when a group of persons comes together with a common and inspired purpose, resulting in a harvest that meets the needs of many in the wider community.

In season: a few moments of quiet reflection might enable us to notice the changes within us as well as those marked on the calendar.