

A Sacred Garden

By Ann Marie Caldwell

Most of us are familiar with the popular fairy gardens, those whimsical tiny gardens that challenge our creativity and remind us of the innocent time of our lives when we believed in the existence of such tiny creatures. Some of us also have gnome gardens, much like the villages of the Hobbits in the J. R. R. Tolkien classic. I have both, but I also have a Sacred Garden, which is an expression of my never-ending faith in God and his Church.

A sacred garden begins with a theme. My inspiration came from the last two chapters of Revelation, which describe the New Jerusalem, established on earth in the end times. I also relied on the end-times prophecies of Isaiah (11:6-9), which describe the peaceful co-habitation of wild and domesticated animals, and those of Ezekiel (47:1-12), which describe water flowing from the new temple in Jerusalem. In deciding my theme, I assessed the sacred symbols I had and decided that my focal point would be a replica of a mission church that had been gathering dust for years. With my theme and focal point established, the next phase was my plan.



I needed to mount my “temple” on a hill, so I amassed dirt in a mound. I also needed a pathway from the temple and waters flowing from each side of it. These I created using rocks. I used sand for the pathway and blue stones set in sand for the rivers and a pond. At the base of the pathway, I created a rather desolate area covered by sand and white stones with three crosses in the center (available on Amazon). The message: “The way to the New Jerusalem is through the Cross of

Jesus.”

I was now ready for the plants. I chose a place for my sacred garden between two trees. It is mostly shady with variegated sun in the morning and full sun in the late afternoon. Every year I change my plants, but I have found that the polka dot plants do best to line the pathway. They are rugged, thrive in shade, and they are colorful. I always use coleus plants, as they are tolerant of shade and come in many pleasing colors. This year, I have chosen to use begonias in my garden because of their shade tolerance and bright flowers. To add contrasting foliage and a look of lushness, I planted Creeping Jenny



between my upright plants. And, as every garden needs a focal point, I planted a Jacob’s Ladder in the middle of my garden. With its variegated foliage it stands out and brings out the colors of the other foliage. It is also symbolic of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden.

Around the crosses I wanted a contrasting feel of harshness, so I chose to plant succulents around the sand and pebble enclosure. This isolated part of my Sacred Garden does not need a lot of watering, so I can bypass it when I water my other plants, which require a daily drink in the heat of summer.

Into this “paradise” I was now ready to introduce figures. I used an old plastic statue of the Risen Christ to mount atop my “Temple,” and figures of saints going down from the Temple (Little Drops of Water, available on Amazon and at Christus Santa Rosa gift shops). In the Garden, I placed the zoo and farm animals (lying useless in boxes since my daughters outgrew childhood play). I placed the lions and lambs around the Cross as a further symbol of the peacefulness promised in the New Jerusalem.

My Sacred Garden is both a visual delight with the interplay of textures and colors and a spiritual haven. Where fairy and gnome gardens can tickle one’s fancies, a Sacred Garden can lift one’s spirits and lead to a contemplation of things eternal.

