

Thinning

FRANCES WRITES TO ME:

I've been noticing what has to be simplified is the abundance in my life – all the opportunity. The metaphor for this is my garden. We have an abundance of growing vegetables – we planted turnips, carrots, daikon radishes, lettuce, herbs, tomatillos, eggplant – they started growing riotously – I couldn't believe how you could plant seeds and then all this stuff would just come up with abandon. I knew I needed to thin those turnips and carrots – but I just couldn't bring myself to do it. I thought maybe they'll grow anyway. So I never did thin or prune those turnips and carrots. They also never did grow. Not one turnip did I get – although there were tons of greens. So I've been reflecting on why I don't want to thin the things in my life that I need to – I just keep holding on for dear life, but those turnips are telling me what will happen if I don't create space for growth, space for life, space for spirit.

~ ~ ~

Thinning is, as Frances says, making space for life. We plant so many seeds, and then seem so small, so benign, they take up hardly any space at all. But everything, as it grows, needs space. Children, a home, a career, a project, a hobby, a spiritual practice, everything needs space, and everything needs time. And as each grows, each one takes from the other, until nothing grows beneath the surface, it is all foliage and greenery aboveground, no nutrition beneath. Sooner or later, it all withers from lack of nourishment.

~

What can you let go of? One thing, beginning with the smallest thing. A book unread – can it be given to the library? An old postcard on the refrigerator, no longer current? An old appliance, never used? Old clothing, never worn, to the poor? What of projects that feel like responsibilities but bring joy to no one? Pick one thing this week, another the next, and discard something that has become unnecessary. Feel any release as you let it go.

From *Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest* by Wayne Muller, Bantam Books, 1999, pp. 184-185