

I'm sure you expected that this would be a lovely, theological piece with a pertinent quote from the Bible or some very holy person. Instead, I found a little quote from a fellow who knew a thing or two that I find is quite apropos to this life we are living just now. Those of us that are so lucky as to store up a little extra food and cleaning supplies and yes, I'll say it, toilet paper, spending our days working online, reading something from that pile of books by the bed, or binge-watching a show - we are just that, so very lucky. Many of us have lost our jobs and worry about money every day, or have to go to work with a mask and worry about catching the virus every day. In the Depression and through the war years, our grandparents did without. They recycled before recycling was cool. They patched and made do with what they had, they rationed, and many of them went hungry. Matt has a reprint of an English book about the war years in Britain, complete with eye-popping recipes, entitled *We'll Eat Again*. And all we are asked to do is stay home. And be patient. And be thankful.

So here's my little quote from a guy you might have heard of:

"Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

-- William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

I'll grant you the toad thing is a little weird. You have to know that in more primitive times, a toad was thought to have a gemstone in its head. I wonder how many toads met untimely ends, because the Franciscan scholar Bartholomaeus Anglicus wrote in the 13th century that the "toadstone" could detect and ease the pain of poison, or snake and insect bites. Poison was a frequent method of assassination in those days and often thought of as the "woman's weapon" (as we all know from Hollywood lore). So I guess I can understand the appeal of having little toadstone in your pocket.

In *As You Like It*, the Duke finds that his younger brother has usurped his duchy and he and his loyal companions have been exiled to the Forest of Arden, where he encourages them to see benefits in leaving the court behind for the simplicity of the woods. Shakespeare highlights the educational and inspirational, invoking learning, reading, and studying scripture without benefit of the classroom, the library or the church. Thus, inside the ugly and venomous head of reality we've found something of real, lasting value.

So there you have it, my little nugget for the day. Inside of our reality is a lesson to be learned, a joy to be discovered in spite of all the prohibitions on our normal lives. Maybe it's family time, or learning a new skill, or enjoying a walk with nowhere to go, or even just being and listening for God's still small voice of calm. The church is still standing though we are not in it. But no matter. We are the church, wherever we are, still looking for the good in "every thing".

Be safe and stay well. Peace,

Karla