

## **THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023**

**By Revd John Marshall**

### **Braiding Sweetgrass - Return from the field trip**

Robin Wall Kimmerer had taken her students on an amazing field trip into the Smokey Mountains. Coming back she was disappointed because the students didn't seem to have learnt what she wanted to teach.

She writes: I plodded along, suddenly weary. I turned to see the students coming down the trail behind me, a petal strewn path in gauzy light. One person, I don't know who, began to sing, ever so quietly, those familiar first notes. The ones that open your throat, irresistibly calling you to sing. *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.* One by one they joined in, singing in the long shadows and a drift of white petals (from silverbells) settling on our shoulders. *That saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found.*

I was humbled. Their singing said everything that my well intentioned lectures did not. On and on they went, adding harmonies as they walked. They understood harmony in a way I did not. I heard in their raised voices the same out-pouring of love and gratitude for the Creation that Sky Woman first sang on the back of Turtle Island. In the caress of that old hymn I came to know that it wasn't naming the source of wonder that mattered it was wonder itself.

Despite my manic efforts and my check list of scientific names I know now that they hadn't missed it all. *Was blind and now I see.* And they did. And so did I.

If I forget every genus and species I ever knew, I'll never forget that moment. The worst teacher in the world or the best teacher in the world --- neither can be heard over the voices of Silverbells and Hermit Thrushes. The rush of waterfalls and the silence of mosses have the last word.

Robin Wall Kimmerer is a Native American, First Nation botanist and Professor of Environmental and Forest Biology and director of the Center for Native Peoples and the environment at New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

What gives you a sense of wonder?

Let's give thanks to God for Creation and Nature.