I remember when I was in Brazil, one of the OFM Franciscans lived out in the colonies. When I asked him why he planted such a big garden, he said: "I plant enough so that a third can be for the thieves, a third for the animals and a third for me." So, when people tell me I plant too many tomatoes, I remember that story. I plant tomato seeds not knowing if they will all come up. If there are more plants than I need, then I give some to people who are wanting and needing them.

I know the animals help themselves. But, through experimenting, I found a way to work with them. When I started planting tomatoes, each morning I would find one or two tomato stalks pulled up and I would have to replant them. I think the animals were thirsty. They smelled the moist ground and were hoping to find water. So, I gave them water and they didn't pull up any more plants. I know they are hungry and need to eat also. So, I give them stale nuts, crackers and bread. Now, they eat those things and leave the tomatoes for us.

One day I found a healthy tomato stalk was broken off. It was just attached by the skin on one side. The plant was already 12 to 15 inches tall. At first, I figured there was no chance of saving it. After thinking about it for a few minutes I decided to try to save it. I thought if it doesn't live, at least I tried. So, I scotch-taped it together. Then I found a 12-inch knitting needle and taped it on the stalk to give support in case of a strong wind. Well, guess what? The plant lived and it produced nice big tomatoes like all of the other plants! We are never too old to learn more. Each year I learn more about yard work and plants.

Response: Reading these simple observations about tomatoes reminded me how God uses our hands to accomplish good on earth. Growing tomatoes can indeed be a profound learning experience. This reflection helped me to pause and remember the myriad ways I can feel God in my life if I only stop the hustle and bustle and reflect on everyday miracles.

Thank you, Sister Martha!

signed, Carol Sejda

Are there some experiences in your life that bring you closer to God? If you are willing to share these, please send your comments to... crjsejda@gmail.com