

RESPECT LIFE MISTRY

Visit the Respect Life Garden during Respect Life Month

Ponder the gift of life during Respect Life month while you discover the symbolism of St Philip's Respect Life Garden.

This October, the Respect Life Garden celebrates its tenth year in our parish! Inspired by the artwork of Rocky Marino, designed by Anja Longenecker, and blessed in 2008, it has become a fixture of our parish.

This month, take a moment or two, and visit it. It is located on the south side of the church, facing the patio. Bring this explanation of its symbolism with you. Discover its life-affirming and inspirational message. And enjoy the perfume of the carefully selected, and lovingly planted roses.



Symbolism in the Bas-Relief: "The Tree of Life"

Standing before the bas-relief, we see immediately the "Tree of Life" extending across the three panels, shading the people walking underneath. The "Tree" is a visual representation of our faith and our life.

Central to the tree is the Holy Spirit soaring out of a rising sun. Just below the Holy Spirit is Christ crucified, a reminder that through Christ's sacrifice we are born again into eternal life. When we open ourselves to Christ, we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us, and are drawn into closer communion with God, our Father.

The tree itself traces our daily journey in faith. To the left, when our faith falters, leaves fall from the branches, leaving them bare. We feel, then, empty and alone. When we renew our faith, the center panel shows leaves sprouting in abundance. As we draw closer to God, cleansed in the saving blood of Christ, and filled with the Holy Spirit, we blossom in our spiritual lives. The right panel shows the branches filled with leaves, blossoms and fruit.

The leaves, blossoms and fruit also mirror our natural life cycle. At conception, we are a blossom. When we are born, we are both leaf and fruit. As we age, we bear our own leaves, blossoms and fruit. Then as we enter our twilight years, as fall comes, our leaves drift to the ground, not lost, but ever living memories of a long, fruitful life. With our roots solid in our faith, fed by Christ, watered by the Holy Spirit, we can confidently repose ourselves into the loving grace of our Father as we enter our eternal home.

The Garden invites us all to spend some time in reflecting on this gift, not just during Respect Life Month, but anytime. A minute of repose can be truly life affirming and refreshment for the soul.