Love of the Natural World Vespers Speech

By: Sophie Kunz, July 11, 2021

Nature is my best friend. She is my muse and inspiration when I feel most low. She helps me slow down when I take on too much. She can be stubborn as a mule and like all friends, always makes it a point to prove you wrong. She can turn even the worst of days into a celebration. And with all that it does, it never asks for reciprocation.

Nowhere is my connection with nature greater than at Camp Wawenock. When I was ten years old, my mom sent me here, the same camp she went to as a girl, for seven weeks. Coming into a new place was daunting. I had questions of how I would fit in, wondering if I would make any friends. But from the second I arrived, all fears melted away. With beautiful golden sunsets every night and waves in a constant cycle lapping at the cove, I knew I had found a friend.

It wasn’t until I had to leave that I realized just how lucky we are to spend the summer here. In the quiet cove of Sebago Lake, we live in cabins with no electricity and onl the sounds of birds as our alarm clocks. Though sometimes we wish the birds would let us sleep in a bit longer, we have the privilege of being completely surrounded by nature in its purest form.

Most of the world doesn’t get this opportunity to truly connect with nature. With half of their time spent on screens, the next generation has to work that much harder to make this connection as there is no substitute for what takes place outdoors. Constant creativity and unscripted moments make it essential to keep them in touch with the earth: its natural rhythms, the changing seasons, its beauty and mystery.

To achieve this, it is up to our youth leaders to assist children in becoming more aware of the world around them; to help them understand the deep satisfaction of being in touch with our surroundings. In the words of Rachel Carson, “it is not half so important to *know* as to *feel* ” the excitement of the natural world. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then emotions are the soil in which the seeds must grow. It is through this emotional response, whether it is a sense of beauty or an excitement of the small things, that we start to seek knowledge about these fascinating topics.

When it came time for me to start looking towards professional aspirations, I found myself thinking about Camp Wawenock. The shadows of the pine trees covering our cabins, the gleam of the sun off the lake, searching the night sky for shooting stars. This is the place I feel in love with nature, so it only seemed like the right path to return and focus on the conservation of all the plants and animals our earth provides.

Like I said before, nature is my best friend. I found her when I was small, and she has made me who I am today. And instead of reciprocating that love, I aid in destroying it. I spread pollution all around, which harms all living creatures. I cut down trees in order to build my home. I waste the beautiful gifts she provides for my own selfish reasons. And despite all I do to hurt her, nature never takes revenge. It keeps on helping, so the least we could do is thank and appreciate her.

I am going to invite you all to close your eyes for a second and just breathe. Now bring your awareness to everything you can experience in your surroundings. Feel the temperature of the air on your skin, the feeling of the breeze and the sun. Notice the sounds around you-the birds, the trees swaying in the wind, waves lapping against the rocks. Listen to the symphony of nature, for the Earth has music for those who listen. As you open our eyes, I want you to keep in mind that nature is a true friend, and I hope you will all find it within yourselves to welcome her with open arms.