

Reprinted from the Christian Science Monitor, October 12, 2000.  
Republished with permission of the Christian Science Publishing  
Society. All rights reserved.

## Bumblebees and business

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.B.

A rose of sharon tree fills the view outside our second-story window.  
Loaded with pink blossoms, it attracts bumblebees galore.

One afternoon, I carefully watched. One bee began working the blossoms  
counterclockwise. Every blossom received attention. Some flowers were  
obviously more to its liking than others. Another bee had a random  
approach. It sampled here then there.

Within 15 minutes the same blossoms were visited several times by different  
bees. Some would relish a blossom that another bee had shunned.

From the bees' perspective, this was about collecting nectar. Their purpose  
may have been self-serving, but unknown to them it was also altruistic.  
They were carrying pollen to fertilize the waiting ovules that form seeds.

I began to think of the daily activities of humans. We might think we're  
flitting from one thing to another, more productive at some times than at  
others. We might define our purpose as gathering some bits of happiness or  
money or friendship.

But more is taking place than simply flying from work to soccer practice to  
the grocery to the evening meeting. While our purpose may be to earn a  
living or raise children, we pick up attitudes that leave impressions wherever  
we go. Like spores of pollen, mental concepts touch everything we do.  
We're spreading either a positive, gentle influence that uplifts and inspires or  
a negative one that discourages and degrades.

Perhaps Jesus was warning people to beware of carrying negative feelings  
from one activity into another when he said, "And whosoever shall not  
receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city,

shake off the dust of your feet" (Matt. 10:14). "Shake off the hurt feelings, frustration, anger, so that it doesn't contaminate your next encounter." Instead of reacting or picking up on someone else's discontent, we can dust it off and so resist unwittingly harming others. Unlike bees, we can choose what thoughts and attitudes we share.

Sweet thoughts bless everyone they touch. Amid deadlines and demands, the calm thought or loving look graces a project and everyone in it. Like a refreshing breeze, the soft word encourages and rejuvenates the sagging spirit. While the pace of activities may not change, the atmosphere is lightened.

Radiating confidence in good, patience, humor, and other qualities of God can benefit everyone with whom we come into contact. Thoughts from God always bless and heal. I think our real purpose in daily tasks is to reflect and express God.

The flower that one bumblebee found uninteresting, another relished. Similarly, a concept we criticize may be the exact idea another person needs. How grateful I've been for co-workers who refuse to put down ideas they don't like. Sometimes a concept that at first appeared unproductive led to a fresh approach and unique solutions.

A couple years ago, I organized a local conference on women in world religions. The planning committee consisted of capable women from diverse religions and backgrounds. Each one had a deeply held set of beliefs and practices. Sometimes it seemed like navigating a minefield blindfolded.

But there were hardly any explosions as inevitable points of contention arose. From the first meeting, no "pollen" of criticism, judgementalism, or partiality was permitted to rub off from one member to another. Defensiveness gradually faded as members began to trust that everyone's views were equally respected. Even quieter individuals began sharing ideas freely. The meetings became productive sessions for individual interaction, learning, and decision making. Instead of reacting, group members began to explore objections as points of interest. In other words, every flower was seen to contain something useful.

The conference was a success. Afterward, almost all the participants commented on the atmosphere. The harmony, openness, and warmth expressed during our meetings were visible at the conference.

As you drone on through deadlines or flit from function to function, consider some words of the Monitor's founder: "Keep yourselves busy with divine Love. Then you will be toilers like the bee, always distributing sweet things . . ." (Mary Baker Eddy, "The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany," pg. 252).