

Manifesto: The Mad Farmers Liberation Front ¹

Love the quick profit, the annual raise,
vacation with pay. Want more
of everything ready-made. Be afraid
to know your neighbors and to die.
And you will have a window in your head.
Not even your future will be a mystery
any more. Your mind will be punched in a card
and shut away in a little drawer.
When they want you to buy something
they will call you. When they want you
to die for profit they will let you know.

So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace
the flag. Hope to live in that free
republic for which it stands.
Give your approval to all you cannot
understand. Praise ignorance, for what man
has not encountered he has not destroyed.

Ask the questions that have no answers.
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.
Say that your main crop is the forest
that you did not plant,
that you will not live to harvest.
Say that the leaves are harvested
when they have rotted into the mold.
Call that profit. Prophecy such returns.

Put your faith in the two inches of humus
that will build under the trees
every thousand years.

Listen to carrion – put your ear
close, and hear the faint chattering
of the songs that are to come.
Expect the end of the world. Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts.
So long as women do not go cheap
for power, please women more than men.
Ask yourself: Will this satisfy
a woman satisfied to bear a child?
Will this disturb the sleep
of a woman near to giving birth?

Go with your love to the fields.
Lie down in the shade. Rest your head
in her lap. Swear allegiance
to what is nighest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and the politicians
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it. Leave it as a sign
to mark the false trail, the way
you didn't go. Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.

Wendell Berry

¹ [Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front](#) – from the Country of Marriage, 1973, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., [All Poetry.com](#), (accessed November 11, 2024).

“Analysis (ai): This poem critiques consumerism, materialism, and the modern world's dehumanizing influences. It advocates for living simply, embracing nature, and prioritizing values like love, community, and spirituality. Compared to Berry's other works, it shares similar themes of environmentalism and critique of modern society, but its tone is more satirical and ironic. For its time period, it aligns with the counterculture movement's rejection of materialism and embrace of nature and community.”¹

Storytelling in small groups or personal reflection. One by one, each person shares their answer to the first prompt below. Then go to the next prompt and so forth. A person can pass.

- 1) Share about your thoughts and feelings as you read or heard “Manifesto: The Mad Farmers Liberation Front” by Wendell Berry.**
- 2) Share about one phrase of the poem that brought up a memory or connection to spending time in nature or in community.**
- 3) Share about how you make sense of and live your life in the culture of “consumerism, materialism and the modern world’s dehumanizing influences.”** (“It [Berry’s poem] advocates for living simply, embracing nature, and prioritizing values like love, community, and spirituality”).
- 4) Tell how your parent’s raised you in your childhood; in a world of “consumerism” and “materialism,” or in a world “for living simply embracing nature, and prioritizing values like love, community, and spirituality,” or somewhere in-between. Share any insights that arose.**

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