

Meditation – For the Beauty of the Earth - 20th April 2021 – for Kathy

For the beauty of the earth
For the beauty of the skies
For the love which from our birth
Over and around in us lies

Our dear friend Kathy, *French Kathy* as she was known in the family, died on February 16th 2021.

I learnt so much from Kathy who had been born and brought up in Le Puy, in the Auvergne, lived in San Sebastian in the early years of having her two children, then stayed briefly in Scotland, Cambridge and near Newcastle. She returned to France and lived in an attic flat in Bordeaux for many years. In all of these places, walking on hills and mountains or beside the sea, seeing gardens, and being in touch with the natural world were so important to Kathy. In the last years of her life, in her seventies, she embarked on walking parts of the *Camino*, the Pilgrims' Way to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

When walking with Kathy she would embrace the tiny things as well as great landscapes. She was an excellent amateur botanist and would reach down to show you a tiny flower, amidst many others, and tell you of its medicinal properties. Kathy was so aware of the healing properties of being outside and being in touch with the natural world.

Psalm 8: 3 – 4

When I look at the sky, which you have made,
At the moon and stars, which you have set in their places -
What are human beings, that you think of them,
Mere mortals that you care for them?

Like Kathy, many of us find, if we are lucky enough to have natural landscapes around us, calm and relaxation by walking, sitting and immersing ourselves in the beauty of the world around us. For me it is to stand or sit by the sea and gaze at that far horizon between the immensity of sea and sky, to be lulled by the sound of the waves. For my husband it is to be in the mountains, high above human habitation, in touch again with the sky and the majesty of snow-capped peaks.

For my grandchildren, like Kathy, it is to find the tiny beautiful objects - pebbles, shells, minnows, fossils in or beside a woodland stream or watch birds whilst hidden from their view.

It takes time to benefit from these opportunities of being in another world so different from but often close to our daily business and stresses.

You may be aware of the Japanese practice of *Forest Bathing*. The experience of immersing yourself in a forest or wood, positively savouring the touch of a tree or becoming aware of the sounds, smells and sights of nature have been shown to have beneficial effects on mind and body.

Forestry England describes *Forest Bathing* as follows:

“This Japanese practice is a process of relaxation; known in Japan as *shinrin-yoku*. The simple method of being calm and quiet amongst the trees, observing nature around you whilst breathing deeply can help both adults and children de-stress and boost health and well-being in a natural way”.

Immersing ourselves in Nature is explored by David Cole in his book, *The Mystic Path of Meditation*. In the chapter *Knowing God through Creation: Meditating on Nature*, Cole guides us through a Meditation Walk and a Meditation on Birds. These meditations provide an opportunity to find the presence of God, to renew strength, rediscover how God loves and cherishes us and praise and thank Him for His wonderful creation. Cole reminds us that we should allow ourselves to relax on the currents of the Spirit's breath.

***May you know the Divine peace,
Which transcends all understanding.
May you be aware of the Prince of Peace
Walking with you and guiding you.
May you know the Spirit of God surrounding you,
Filling you, and transforming you.
May you allow God to show you new things
So you become truly enlightened.***

For the beauty of the earth
For the beauty of the skies
For the love which from our birth
Over and around in us lies
Over and around us lies

Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our joyful hymn of praise

For the beauty of the hour
Of the day and of the night
Hill and vale and tree and flower
Sun and moon and stars of light
Sun and moon and stars of light

For the joy of human love
Brother, sister, parent, child
Friends on earth and friends above
For all gentle thoughts and mild
For all gentle thoughts and mild

For each perfect gift of thine
To our race so freely given
Graces human and divine
Flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n
Flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n

For the Beauty of the Earth - John Rutter (lyrics) , performed by St. Phillip's Boys' Choir -
YouTube

