4th August 2024

Beauty

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
pass into nothingness."
John Keats, *Endymion*

In his *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif,* the 18th century French writer and philosopher, Voltaire, said this:

It is not sufficient to see and to know the beauty of a work.
We must feel and be affected by it.

I knew the truth of that at a recent concert by the Scottish musicians, Aly Bain and Phil Cunningham. It happened during a "slow air", when the notes of the fiddle and accordion took me to an unexpected place, and I was in tears. Through the beautiful melody and the exquisite playing, I was taken to a special place, and, for a moment, all was well with the world.

Eckhart Tolle, the German/Canadian writer, wrote in *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* in 2005, "Seeing beauty in a flower could awaken humans, however briefly, to the beauty that is an essential part of their own innermost being, their true nature." Through Aly and Phil's music, I was awakened to beauty. I was seeing beauty, feeling it, being affected by it. I was in touch with that "essential part" of my "own innermost being." Aly and Phil had given me a gift of recognising that beauty can still be found in a frightening, broken, agonising, painful world.

"Beauty is the sole aspect of the spiritual which we can perceive through our senses." So wrote the German novelist, Thomas Mann, in *Death in Venice.* The rightness of that thought was all too clear to me in the moment of beauty Aly and Phil had created for me.

We all need moments of beauty to help us make sense of a crazy world, offer a glimpse of the spiritual, help us find our true nature. So today I invite you not only to recognise those moments of beauty, but to allow yourself to be transported by them, even if only for a moment. Why not take an opportunity to remember the ones that in Keats' words are "a joy forever" and will "never pass into nothingness". And as you do, give thanks to God that the gift of beauty is still there when we need it most.

A prayer for today

"Perfect in beauty, God shines forth," the Psalmist said.
A moment of beauty is a glimpse of that God. Amen

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