NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (https://www.ncronline.org)

One of God's most beautiful names

Rich Heffern | Oct. 1, 2009

(Dreamstime)

Earth and Spirit

When we breathe out a heartfelt ?Wow!? we are praying, for it?s more than just an element of surprise, originality, or a coolness factor that elicits this expression.

Kabir, a 12th-century Indian mystic, said: ?When we say, ?Ahhhhh!? and say it with a deep sigh? -- the kind of exclamation that comes from our depths whenever we witness some aspect of the world?s blessing -- ?that ?Ahhhhh!? is one of God?s most beautiful names.?

Each time you express that primal sound of wonder, you are announcing the presence of holy mystery.

Working on a newspaper is about divining what feature or news story will help readers navigate tumultuous times, then making it appear in print or on the Web. Tension, apprehension and dissension are often our stock in trade. As a counter to this, I?ve tried to develop a spiritual life fortified by ?Wow!? moments, for thankfully the riches of this world we find ourselves in are well-nigh inexhaustible. We are extravagantly blessed with simple gifts.

Consider as evidence the delight of mornings, the sparkle and glint of sun on newly minted leaves in the fever that is spring, the common sight of blue skies overhead visited by shining galleons of cloud, the good smell of rain, the incensed breezes of summer.

Have you noticed the world is crammed with hop toads and cat?s tongues, with the painted curves, bends and folds of flowers, the tang of apples, the light-footed grace of running deer, the dazzle and twist of sleek leaping trout in a stream, the time-sculpted crags, wrinkles and wizened features of our glittery-eyed elders, the bony knees of towheaded children, the sweet and haunting incoherence of our own dreams?

These treasures make wealthy tycoons of us all. You don?t have to be a nature lover either.

City dwellers can easily locate treasure galore on muffled midwinter walks down snow-hushed sidewalks when

the street lights come on at four, or humid summer evenings porch-sitting to the metronome blessing of cicadas, wet streets dazzle-painted with electric reflections after late evening rains, companionable dinners with loved ones in restaurant booths like friendly confessionals, the gee-whiz fulfillment walking home after a July Fourth technicolor fireworks display down at the commons, walks in the fresh air and crisp light of autumn to the music of kids? laughter on playgrounds, browsing past arrays in antique shop windows on Saturday afternoons, those bedazzled nights on the town you just want to go on and on, the energy and bustle of downtown sidewalks on weekday afternoons.

Kabir said: ?I was surprised when I heard the fish in the ocean were thirsty.? Who among us has not felt like a beggar at a banquet -- much too often too busy or distressed-frazzled to stand out in the great blessing of our backyards?

I want to offer the Catholic practice of contemplation, as a method for us ocean-dwellers to quench our thirst.

For the world is afloat on the holy, crammed with the sacred, strewn and littered with beauty everywhere that is full of grace and with simple gifts that bespeak a sly benevolence behind things.

Thomas Merton called them ?wheels of fire, cosmic, rich, full-bodied honest victories over desperation.?

We encounter these moments that rumor and gossip of the goodness of our world, occasions when our hope and faith in life and others are restored, when we sense a deep harmony behind things, when we sit and savor the mute blessedness of creation and the vast mystery that underlies that blessing. Such excursions and encounters are the pulsing heartbeat of the world?s spiritualities. Forays into blessedness fortify and nurture our wholeness.

Merton again: ?There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.?

Rich Heffern is an NCR *staff writer. His email address is* rheffern@ncronline.org.

Source URL (retrieved on *12/07/2016 - 09:53*): https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/one-gods-most-beautiful-names