

Sacred Spaces and Special places

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Most of us all seem to live such busy lives with every spare moment filled with activities and action. It is often so difficult to slow down. We often find our energies channelled in many directions, with new demands being made upon a scarce amount of free time. It is nice to feel wanted or needed but it is important not to lose the sense of self. There is so little time or space to be or to discover the real "me".

We are reminded in the Gospel that we should take a holistic view of our lives as being body, mind and spirit. The body generally makes its demands known to us. Art, music, books, newspapers, conversation and TV help to inform or feed the mind but what of the spirit and our spirituality? How often do we take time or make time for reflection or prayer? What feeds our spiritual needs and recharges our spiritual batteries?

Standing in Richmond Park, looking across the sweeping landscape with the skyline of the City in the distance, I was led to reflect upon how many spiritual experiences are said to happen on hilltops or mountain-tops. The promised land was seen from Mount Nebo. Moses and God met on Mount Horeb and the Ten Commandments were delivered on Mount Sinai. Many a time Jesus preached and taught on the hills, indeed the Transfiguration took place on one. To stand on a hilltop is to experience something of the awe and beauty of creation and to feel for a moment the freedom of the real without distortion or illusion. It is to be a part of a greater whole and to regain a sense of perspective, being connected to the larger patterns of living.

Why not walk among rocks or contemplate standing stones, mountains or cliffs? Think of the forces which created them so many millions of years ago and call to mind their strength and permanence. To do so is to draw strength from the power of creation and to experience eternity, a "forever moment".

Why not walk beside the River Thames or past flowing water and contemplate its movement, its vitality, its power? Give thanks with your whole heart for being alive and rejoice in the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you are standing by a well, so much the better. The Bible speaks of many creative and spiritual meetings by wells. Look into its darkness and depth so as to feel its mystery and its history. Try also to recognise its life giving qualities shared with those who make the effort to request what it gives. Boundaries, crossing places, groves and springs also carry in their physical nature spiritual power.

July and August is a time for holidays with loved ones or friends to see and explore new and exciting places or to visit or be in special ones. When you are there take time to look for the sacred spaces, they are all around you. If you are staying at home go for a walk in Richmond Park or gaze at the Thames from the top of Richmond Hill.