

Shapes for Living

An Awareness Walk

Being prayerful and playful outdoors

Decide beforehand where you will walk (roads, pathways, garden ...) and how long for.

A suggestion would be for 15 mins – not less.

Read this *all* through before you start.

Begin with prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit
Amen

Begin Jesus said, 'follow me'. We are *following* Jesus on this walk

1. Walk slowly, deliberately. You are going to use all your five senses as you walk, so start by being aware of the light, the texture of the light, the touch of the air, the colours around you.
2. Begin to notice greater details in patterns, shapes, thickness, the shades of colours, the contrasts and juxtapositions and how things relate.
3. Touch and feel, pick up stones, twigs, earth, leaves and hold them gently. If it is sensible take off your shoes and walk barefoot. (Try to receive all this without censoring, rejecting or measuring. Pavements, buildings, machines, people are all part of your walk and world).
4. Try to stop thinking and simply to be. Let everything drop away and instead try to be totally present to what is reaching you through your senses.
5. Begin to notice more acutely, the scent of growing things, of the earth itself. Listen to the range of sounds, far off distant sounds, those which are close, your own breathing.
6. You may want at the end of the walk to bring back something that you have particularly enjoyed and place it in the place of prayer.

Consider this statement from Bede Griffiths, of Prinknash Abbey, in his autobiography, 'the Golden String'*:

"One day during my last term at school I walked out alone in the evening and heard the birds singing in that full chorus of song, which can only be heard at that time of year or at sunset. I remember now the shock of surprise with which the sound broke on my ears. It seemed to me that I had never heard the birds singing before and I wondered if they sang like this all year round and I had never noticed it. As I walked on, I came upon some hawthorn trees in full bloom and again I thought that I had never seen such a sight or experienced such sweetness before. If I had been brought suddenly among the trees of the Garden of Paradise and heard a choir of angels singing I could not have been more surprised...

I remember now the feeling of awe which came upon me. I felt inclined to kneel on the ground, as though I had been standing in the presence of an angel; and I hardly dared to look on the face of the sky, because it seemed as though it was but a veil before the face of God...

This is ... the 'golden string' of Blake's poem:

*'I give you the end of a golden string;
Only wind it into a ball,
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate,
Built in Jerusalem's wall'* ~ William Blake

It is the grace which is given to every soul, hidden under the circumstances of our daily life, and easily lost if we choose not to attend to it. To follow up the vision which we have seen, to keep it in mind when we are thrown back again on the world, to live in its light and shape our lives by its law, is to wind the string into a ball, and to find our way out of the labyrinth of life."

(*From Bede Griffiths, 'The Golden String: An Autobiography'. Collins, 1954)

"To contemplate the smallest object is to experience the Trinity" ~ Olivier Clement

"The world is charged with the grandeur of God" ~ Gerard Manley Hopkins

"He showed me a little thing, the size of a hazelnut, in the palm of my hand, and it was as round as a ball. I looked at it with my mind's eye and I thought, 'What can this be?' And answer came, 'It is all that is made,' I marvelled that it could last, for I thought it might have crumbled to nothing, it was so small. And the answer came into my mind, 'It lasts and ever shall because God loves it.' In this little thing I saw three truths. The first is that God made it. The second is that God loves it. The third is that God looks after it." ~ Julian of Norwich