THINK ABOUT IT

Don Meyer, Ph.D.

The Enchanting World of Nature

“I have plenty of machinery around me; what I really need is a more enchanting world in which to live and work.”
—Thomas Moore

“The soul has an absolute, unforgiving need for regular excursions into enchantment.” Those words by Thomas Moore in the Introduction to his book The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life (1996) speak volumes to me about living life beyond the realm of the routine and mundane.

Moore defines enchantment as “a spell that comes over us, an aura of fantasy and emotion that can settle on the heart and either disturb it or send it into rapture and reverie.” He speaks of falling in love and how it effects more than just life with that person. It affects all of life. Everything we see and hear and feel and do is enchanted by the love we have for one other person.

Enchantment may surprise us as when “you stumble across a roaring, resplendent waterfall, as I once did, in the middle of a quiet forest, and you become entranced. The stunning vision fixes itself in memory, and you wish you could have other moments of similar transporting charm.”

As I read those words I am transported to places I have visited. I think of the Royal Gorge in Colorado and the mighty Mississippi River. I think of that rainy day before Mount Rushmore when the water made those faces appear like they were crying. I think of Niagara Falls and the Panama City beach and Pike’s Peak and the corn fields of Iowa and the Great Smokey Mountains.

The northeast has its own capacity for enchantment. From the colors in the fall to the flowers of the spring and from the snow flocked trees to the hot, arid summers, the ebb and flow of each season communicates awe inspiring uniqueness.

How easy it is for us to be caught up in the rush of life and miss the enchantment that is all around us. Moore says, “In general, it’s difficult to imagine being busy and enchanted at the same time. Enchantment invites us to pause and be arrested by whatever is before us; instead of our doing something, something is done to us. This is the way of the soul, which is primarily the receptive power in us; by letting ourselves be slowed down and effected by nature…”

As I read those words something stirs deep inside of me. It feels somewhat mysterious, even mystical. I guess that’s why I like the word enchantment. And I have discovered I don’t need to travel far to experience it. I can drop my briefcase off in the kitchen, take
off my suit coat and tie, roll up my sleeves and go for a walk in my flower garden and that enchantment comes over me. I feel it as I look at the hydrangeas opening up and just touches of blue and pink appear on those delicate petals.

I feel it as I look at the buds of the Shasta daisies opening. I feel it as I study the shapes and shades of the hostas. I even feel it as I deadhead the geraniums and peonies and coreopsis. I feel it when I watch hummingbirds drink nectar or a small sparrow pick up a few seeds from the grass.

I also agree with Moore’s insight, “An enchanted life has many moments when the heart is overwhelmed by beauty and the imagination is electrified by some haunting quality in the world or by a spirit or voice speaking from deep within a thing, a place, or a person.”

Enchantment is all around us but we must be attentive to find it. It will not scream at us on big loudspeakers. It will whisper to us in hushed tones. We must look and listen and feel and taste and smell our world if we are to be enchanted by the beauties of God’s creation.

Think about it.

Dr. Don Meyer is President of Valley Forge Christian College, Phoenixville, PA
Responses can be emailed to president@vfcc.edu