

EARLY MORNING

The famous Japanese poet Basho (1644-1694) Buddhist monk and lifelong traveller always rose very early in the morning, usually at dawn. He would wash in the mountain stream and then sit in meditation. This was his spiritual discipline. Benjamin Franklin also extolled the virtues of health, wealth and wisdom to getting up early.

I have learnt something of this wisdom in my own way too. I have always been an early riser, but now I get up early for ‘ inner reasons’. It has nothing to do with cramming more hours into the day for more and more ‘things’, quite the opposite! Early rising gives time for stillness, solitude, and quite. There is something mysterious about the dawn that is deeply attractive. Maybe it’s the quiet stillness as the darkness gives way to the gentle light of dawn. At certain times of the year the sound of the dawn chorus adds another sense of wonder. The seasons of the year also bring their own sense of the mystery of change. For me it’s the perfect time for prayer and quiet meditation. A Sioux Indian Chief once said: “In life there is only one great duty – the duty of prayer. Each Soul must meet the morning sun, the sweet earth, and the Great Silence alone. What is this Silence? It is the Great Mystery, the Holy Silence is His Voice!” There is great wisdom here, but I think too few take any notice.

Getting up early can really influence the rest of your day. Of course, if you are to do this you must get to bed early enough! Starting the day with a firm foundation of mindful prayer and quiet can flow into your daily activities and bring some balance to life. Whereas, if we get out of bed at the last minute and gulp a cup off coffee and rush of the work, that too will influence your day. To witness the dawn each day is in itself a wake up call from somewhere beyond our understanding. It is a call from the Spirit.

For me, it has become an important part of my day. It is a practice I learnt many years ago, influenced as I was by a visit to Japan. Over many years it has never lost it’s allure. Yes, there are times when it’s difficult to get out of bed, especially on a winter morning. But the value of it is doing it even when I don’t want to! In our world of obsessive doing, it’s good to spend some special time just being. . This practice is not just for monks, nuns and zen mountain dwellers. Anyone can practice this way of prayer. If you are not an early type of person, but would like to bring some of what I’m speaking of into your life, why not get up a little earlier and see if it draws you. It’s the intention that counts, even a few minutes can have an effect.

Like the Japanese poet Basho, morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me!

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