



Thirsty For Wonder, by Mirabai Starr

Contemplative life flows in a circular pattern: awe provokes introspection, which invokes awe.

Maybe youâ€™re making dinner and you step outside to snip chives from the kitchen garden just as the harvest moon is rising over the easter slopes. She is full and golden, like one of those pregnant women who radiate from within. Suddenly you cannot bear the beauty. Scissors suspended in your hand, tears pooling at the corners of your eyes, you nearly quit breathing. Your gaze softens, and the edges of your individual identity fade. You are absorbed into the heart of the moon. It feels natural, and there is no other place youâ€™d rather be. But the onions are burning, and so you turn away and cut your herbs and go back inside. You resume stirring the sauce and setting the table.

This is not the first time you have disappeared into something beautiful. You have experienced the unfettering of the subject-object distinction while holding your daughterâ€™s hand as she labored to give birth to your grandson; when you curled up in bed with your dying friend and sang her *“Haskiveinu,”* the Hebrew prayer for a peaceful sleep; while yielding to your [loved ones]. You have lost yourself in heartbreak, then lost the desire to ever regain yourself, then lost your fear of death. You long ago relinquished your need for cosmic order and personal control. You welcome unknowingness.

Which is why seemingly ordinary moments like moonrises undo you. The veil has been pulled back. Everything feels inexhaustibly holy. [...] Your soul had been formed in the forge of lifeâ€™s losses, galvanized in the crucible of community, fertilized by the rain of relationship, blessed by your intimacy with Mother Earth. You have glimpsed the face of the Divine where you least expected it.

And this is why you cultivate contemplative practice. The more you intentionally turn inward, the more available the sacred becomes. When you sit in silence and turn your gaze toward the Holy Mystery you once called God, the Mystery follows you back out into the world. When you walk with a purposeful focus on breath and bird song, your breathing and the twitter of the chickadee reveal themselves as a miracle. When you eat your burrito mindfully, gratitude for every step that led to the perfect combination of beans and cheese and tortilla â€” from grain and sunlight to rain and migrant labor â€” fills your heart and renders you even more inclined to be grateful.

So sit down to meditate not only because it helps you to find rest in the arms of the formless Beloved but also because it increases your

chance of being stunned by beauty when you get back up. Encounters with the sacred that radiate from the core of the ordinary embolden you to cultivate stillness and simple awareness. In the midst of a world that is begging you to distract yourself, this is no easy practice. Yet you keep showing up. You are indomitable. You are thirsty for wonder.

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