

The beauty of looking at the bigger picture

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Today has not been my normal, run of the mill Saturday. Not at all! This morning saw me and my family take to the skies of North Yorkshire in a helicopter. A wonderful gift to us, from a friend.

We all felt a little nervous, as this was our first ever flight, but the tension within each of us quickly melted as we took off and were able to see all around us. We were totally amazed at the beauty of the place where we belong. It was actually harder than you think to spot the places that we live and work in each day. Those ordinary places, that take up so much of our energy and our time. I even missed our house which we flew directly over!

My eyes were drawn more to the following things:



miles of dry stone walls so the land looked like a patchwork quilt;



thick, dark forests;



Scarcroft Reservoir – an incredible feat of Victorian engineering – wow!



and newly ploughed fields.

I was totally bowled over by the beauty of this bigger picture. I gazed in wonder at the rich variety of types of landscape and structures that surround the place where I live. These places and spaces stand around me each day. They are a blessing to me and yet I rarely even think about them. It is so easy to get into the habit of focussing on the smaller picture of the tight places in which I can dwell – the frustrations, unsolved problems and the sheer busyness of each day. I can so easily see these things as the big and important factors in my life, and then they can get a grip on me, they loom and tower above me and cast their shadows and limit my view.

Today's trip was a fantastic reminder of how there is always an invitation to look at what we have and at where we are through different eyes. From a different perspective. Celtic spirituality did just that. It was an outdoor spirituality that offered the constant invitation to look at the landscape and experience the Eternal. The senses were really used, as well as thought and imagination, to give an earthy reality to the presence of God. It really put people in touch with the Divine in the very fabric of their lives. This is reflected beautifully in an ancient poem of Celtic culture – the song of Amergin – where everything is named within the Divine:

**I am wind on sea
I am ocean wave
I am roar of sea
I am bull of seven fights
I am eagle on cliff
I am dew drop
I am fairest of flowers
I am boar for boldness
I am salmon in pool
I am lake on plain
I am a mountain in a man
I am a word of skill
I am the point of a weapon
I am God who fashions fire in the head.**

What a wonderful invitation to experience the abundant generosity of God in nature. In flowers, lakes, ocean waves and in the fire in my head. My learning heart is beginning to trust more fully in the strength of God that is there for me. I don't mean a brute strength, but a glorious inner strength. St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (3 16-19) talked of this

'I ask God, from the wealth of his glory to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves, and I pray that you may have your roots and foundations in love, so that you may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep is Christ's love. Yes, may you come to know his love-although it can never be fully known – and so be filled with the very nature of God.'

Seeing the vast expanse of the landscape I live in from a different perspective really gave me a sense of this 'very nature of God' today. I am not separate from it –I am very much a part of it. I too have a vast inner landscape that mirrors the essence of God:

I am Paula, I am loving mother, I am kind word, I am gentle, I am compassion, I am laughter and tears, I am blazing fire in the head, I am flash of anger, I am calm presence, I am searching, I am tender embrace, I am vulnerable, I am helping hands.

I am filled with the very nature of God.