

Everyday WONDER

Wonder is the antidote to despair.

Words inspired by an article in 'The Bridge' magazine from Alnmouth parish, and a new book by a research psychologist entitled 'Everyday Wonder': it seems a daily dose of awe is good for our mental wellbeing!



Sad that we go about our daily routines almost oblivious to many wonders around us. We may be amazed at 'magic' tricks yet, as a former Dean of Westminster points out, **'It is not the rabbit out of the hat that is the wonder, but the rabbit out of the rabbit'**. Heaven is vibrant in the ordinary if we but stop and look.

'Mountain Top Moments' do not require us to be hillclimbers. Hoar frost on a blade of grass or dew on a spider's web can also cause us to stop and gawp. Tom was 12 and had never been outside the city of Newcastle. On a school field trip to Allendale, as we walked along the road, he stopped and looked down, his eyes wide with wonder. The feldspar chippings on the road surface were glistening in the morning sun and he was enchanted: *"It's so beautiful – so amazing!"* This was an unexpected 'hill-top' moment for Tom. Such things register in our brain and, via the vagus nerve, can release well-being chemicals within us.

Michael Faraday, scientist and pioneer of electricity, observed: *"Let us consider... how wonderfully we stand upon this earth. Here it is that we are born, bred and live, and yet we view these things with an almost entire absence of wonder."* Times when we readjust our sense of self in the context of things universal and timeless, when we see the miraculous in the 'ordinary' stuff, help us to find meaning and joy in life.

The shepherds were 'awe-struck' at the baby in the manger. The wise men were amazed to be led by a star to a humble stable. Simeon and Anna were blessed with the wonder of the Christ-child in their arms. An ancient carol proclaims the wonder...

A Great and Mighty Wonder, a full and holy cure!...

The Word becomes incarnate and yet remains on high....

Repeat the hymn again! 'To God on high be glory and peace on earth to reign'.

Christmas brings the greatest Everyday Wonder of all - the incarnation...**God with us!**

So whether you're a city dweller or a rural resident – hold on tightly to your sense of wonder – it's an everyday gift from God for the New Year and in all circumstances.

Photograph AEM: a 'star-burst' of sunlight refracted through a glass of water.