



For the Beauty of the Earth



"For the beauty of the earth,
for the glory of the skies;
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies.

"For the wonder of each hour,
of the day and of the night;
hill and vale and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of night.

"For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth and friends above;
for all gentle thoughts and mild.

"For Thy church which evermore
lifteth holy hands above;
offering up on every shore
her pure sacrifice of love.
Lord of all, to Thee we raise,
this our hymn of grateful praise."

"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or worthy of praise - think on these things." - Philippians 4:8

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." - James 1:17

"I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders." - Psalm 9:1

Now that we are "retired," John and I spend a lot of time with our three young grandsons who live nearby. It occurs to me that we used to be tired from our jobs and all the activity of raising our large family. Now we are tired for different reasons, one of which is keeping up with these little guys. After a good night's sleep, we are ready to get "re-tired" as we do it all over again. It is a joy to be sure, but we pray for strength to enjoy all of our blessings!

It fascinates me to see how babies and young children are always discovering things, and learning so much about the world around them. At this stage of our lives, we can take the

time to watch this process take place and share stories about all of our sweet grandchildren at the end of each busy day.

This is what the author of today's hymn is pointing out in his beautiful lyrics about the common blessings of life we often take for granted. "For the Beauty of the Earth" was written by Folliot Sandford Pierpoint, who was born in the old town of Bath, England - so named because of the large pools of natural mineral baths.

It is said that Folliot was inspired to write this lovely hymn text as he strolled about the town one day in late spring, enthralled by the beautiful countryside, with the winding Avon River in the distance. His heart was filled with wonder as he beheld the beauty all around him, and thought of the human relationships that enriched his life so much. And above all, there were the spiritual blessings represented by the Church, and her people who lifted their hymn of grateful praise to the Father who is the source of all good and perfect gifts to His children.

I often repeat the words of this hymn as I go about my day, especially in the beautiful months of spring. And I am always grateful, in every season, for the members of our family, and those long-time friends who feel like family to us. Of course, there are other people who we have come to know more recently who have taken their place in our hearts and lives, and make our earthly journey more lovely. These precious relationships that we experience over a lifetime are like a beautiful bouquet, adding one "flower" at a time, each with its own special beauty.

Mr. Pierpoint mentions "friends on earth and friends above," and the older we get the more we can relate to this line. A number of family members and friends have gone on before us, and we are left with sweet memories of our years together. But, for those who knew the Lord in this life, we have the assurance that they are with Him, and our heavenly home awaits us as well.

I like the phrase "for all gentle thoughts and mild," because it speaks of those quiet moments with God that only happen as we separate ourselves from the noisy world around us and think His thoughts instead of our own. This is one of the blessings of working in my garden, since everything else takes second place to the priority of caring for a small portion of God's creation. And it is easier to hear His voice as I take part in the glories of His handiwork.

So let us be more like children as we behold the beauty of the earth, the glory of the skies, and "the love which from our birth over and around us lies." May we render our grateful hymn of praise to the Lord each day, and pray with David, "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to meditate in His temple."