

# OPENHEARTED WONDER

Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement.

By Anne Bonnefin  
Australia Mission Centre communications coordinator

## THE WORST THING

The worst thing we ever did  
was put God in the sky  
out of reach pulling the divinity  
from the leaf,  
sifting out the holy from our bones,  
insisting God isn't bursting dazzlement  
through everything we've made  
a hard commitment to see as ordinary,  
stripping the sacred from everywhere  
to put in a cloud man elsewhere,  
prying closeness from your heart.

The worst thing we ever did  
was take the dance and the song  
out of prayer  
made it sit up straight  
and cross its legs  
removed it of rejoicing  
wiped clean its hip sway,  
its questions,  
its ecstatic yowl,  
its tears.

The worst thing we ever did is pretend  
God isn't the easiest thing  
in this Universe  
available to every soul  
in every breath.

—Chelan Harkin, from *Susceptible to Light*,  
reprinted with permission

wonder if it all started with “I wonder?” I mean all of it: life, the universe, our world, us. The whole thing! Is all of life just one big creative expression? Are Spirit and matter intertwined?

We need to awaken our everyday existence to the sacredness of the holy event of Christmas—of God with us.

How can we stay curious and live into the questions, to awaken our hearts into faithful relationship with the Divine and to act, be guided, and inspired?

Wonder comes from Old English *wundor*, meaning marvelous thing, object of astonishment. How often do adults take time to wonder as we did as children? Do we allow ourselves to be astonished by God? How do we awaken to God, not in a far-off place but forever present within our essential nature and our intimate relationship with this Earth?

It’s amazing! God’s essence flows through everything. We can awaken to this wisdom deep within and to the sacred interrelationship of all things with an attitude of wonder.

Consider a Celtic cross. In it are conjoined symbols—the symbol of Christ and the round shape of the cosmos. Embodied in this symbol is the message that the deeper we move in anything that has being, the closer we come to the Presence that Christ embodies. Within Community of Christ, the symbol of the spiral has us pondering similar spiritual connections to the divine energy in all things.

However, we have become so good at consumption or distraction that we leave little room for contemplation or wonder. When do we take the time to connect with the Earth, sit and listen to the unspoken words in a conversation, put pen to paper and see what emerges, or listen to the Divine deep in all of creation?

I remember a time with Everett Graffeo and a group heading to a church gathering in New Zealand. I hadn’t flown for a long time and was anxious. Everett startled me by asking, “Do you really think today is the day that your life is going to be over?” As we continued our conversation, I remembered that as a child I was delighted by flying.

It was the wonder of the plane climbing through fog, then bursting into a clear sky with glistening white clouds below so thick you could imagine walking on them. I realized that my attitude was a choice: My experience was determined by how I was framing the event. I decided then and there to let wonder walk with my anxiety.

Wonder can live with grief, disappointment, rejection, and pain. It makes all the difference to frame our life through a perspective of wonder.

We all need, forever, what Jesus described as “the beginner’s mind” of a curious child. A beginner’s mind is the best path for spiritual wisdom.

Instead of grasping for certainty wisdom rides the question, lives the question. When the question for certainty and control is pushed to the background the possibility of wonder returns. Wonder provides a gateway to wise insight....Incorporating negative and self-critical thinking is essential to true prophetic understanding. At the same time, we must also trust

that we are held irrevocably in the mystery of God’s love, without fully understanding it. ...

—Richard Rohr

Alongside all our knowing, accompanying every bit of our knowing, must be the humble “knowing that we do not know.”

—Tobin Hart

We begin with a beginner’s mind, sit with the unknowing, the mystery, the silence. This is a form of prayer. We bring what we know about life, God, and love and then allow space for God to breathe in and around us. We engage wonder as a way of trusting in God’s love without fully understanding it.

Wisdom is what happens when you open your heart up to curiosity and wonder...wisdom lives the questions...it doesn’t profess it knows the answer to everything.

—Liz Milani

If you want to find the way to wonder—start with sitting in silence and gratitude, and then open your heart to listen for love.

A Celtic legend of John the Beloved says that as he leaned against Jesus at the Last Supper, he heard the heartbeat of God. This became a metaphor of the practice of deep listening for the beat of the sacred. This time of Advent is about the coming of the Divine among us and listening anew to the heartbeat of God.

In this Advent season, take time to listen to the heartbeat of the Divine that resides within the Christmas Story. What stirs you to wonder? Where can you open anew to this mystery deep within yourself. It was not just about an event long ago—but what is being born within you. To really know the Christmas Story is to awaken something of the story within yourself. There is wonder and a treasure of holiness, wholeness within you. Awaken your deepest sensibilities to the wonder you find in yourself and around you.

Imagine for a moment...can you hear the heartbeat of the newborn Christ Child?...Imagine...listen within the sound...How does this sound reverberate within you? “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world” (John 1:9 NRSV).

We can open ourselves to this radical, sacred light in all things. Wonder allows us to honor, nurture, and come into true relationship with it, allowing it to further reawaken in us the sacredness at the heart of our own being, so we can be a people to paint joyously God’s vision for creation.

A vision where at the heart of all being we hear the beat of the Divine. We can move out from this place of love. Create our own story, centered in the love of Christ and framed in the wonder of our holy connection with the Divine in all things.

Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement... Get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed.

—Abraham Joshua Heschel

