



DIVINE BEAUTY: THE INVISIBLE EMBRACE

BY
JOHN O'DONOHUE

(Selected quotes)

“The human soul is hungry for beauty; we seek it everywhere – in landscape, music, art, clothes, furniture, gardening, companionship, love, religion and in ourselves. No-one would desire not to be beautiful. When we experience the Beautiful, there is a sense of homecoming. Some of our most wonderful memories are of beautiful places where we felt immediately at home. We feel most alive in the presence of the Beautiful for it meets the needs of our soul.”

“Beauty cannot be forced. It alone decides when it will come and sometimes it is the last thing we expect and the very last thing to arrive. Creative artists know this well. Great skill and inspiration set the context or scene where beauty might emerge. But it is not the mind of the artist alone that can determine whether beauty will arrive or not.”

“Frequently, beauty is playful like dancing sunlight, it cannot be predicted, and in the most unlikely scene or situation can suddenly emerge. This spontaneity and playfulness often subverts our self-importance and throws our plans and intentions into disarray. Without intending it, we find ourselves coming alive with a sense of celebration and delight. The pedestrian sequence of a working day breaks, a new door opens and the heart recognizes the silent majesty of the ordinary. The things we never notice, like health, friends and love, emerge from their subdued presence and stand out in their true radiance as gifts we could never have earned or achieved. Beauty”

“When you regain a sense of your life as a journey of discovery, you return to rhythm with yourself. When you take the time to travel with reverence, a richer life unfolds before you. Moments of beauty begin to braid your days.”

“Beauty is a free spirit and will not be trapped within the grid of intentionality.”

“listening to music renews the heart precisely for this reason: it plumbs the gravity of sorrow until it finds the point of submerged light and lightness. Listening to music stirs the heavy heart; it alters the gravity. Unconsciously it schools us in a different way to hold sorrow. When the music is dark it works through dissonance and harsh notes; like underpainting their beauty is slow to reveal itself but it does ultimately dawn. It frees a space to let in lightness. Unlike anything else in the world, music is neither image nor word and yet it can say and show more than a painting or poem.”

“The longing at the heart of attraction is for union with the Beautiful.”

“The earth is full of thresholds where beauty awaits the wonder of our gaze.”

“The beauty of the earth is the first beauty. Millions of years before us the earth lived in wild elegance. Landscape is the first-born of creation. Sculpted with huge patience over millennia, landscape has enormous diversity of shape, presence and memory.”

“The beauty of the imagination is that it can discover such magnificent vastness inside a tiny space. Our culture is dominated by quantity. Even those who have plenty hunger for more and more. Everywhere around us, the reign of quantity extends and multiplies. Sadly the voyage of greed has all the urgency but no sense of destination. Desire becomes inflated and loses all sense of vision and proportion. When beauty becomes an acquisition it brings no delight.”

“The wonder of an object is that it is not a thought. A thing is first and foremost itself. An inconsequential pebble picked up on the side of the road has preceded us by anything up to four hundred million years, and its face will be brightened still further by rain that will fall here thousands of years after we have vanished. We might change things in the world, yet the most minimal, seemingly insignificant object outlasts us.”

“The earth is our origin and destination. The ancient rhythms of the earth have insinuated themselves into the rhythms of the human heart. The earth is not outside us; it is within: the clay from where the tree of the body grows.”

“There is a poetic import to the phrase ‘without a shadow of a doubt’: in all probability, there is no doubt without a shadow. Doubt is the shadow cast when something gets in the way of the light. Ironically, doubt itself often brings greater light because of the shadow it casts.”

“In contrast, the Beautiful offers us an invitation to order, coherence and unity. When these needs are met, the soul feels at home in the world.”

“Time unfolds in light. In the morning, light clears all the outside darkness and the shape of each thing emerges in the brightened emptiness. Light identifies itself completely with the voyage of a day; its transparency puts the day out in the open. There is nowhere for a day to hide; it is exposed every minute to the revelations of light. Perhaps this is why twilight appears gracious; when light abandons the day, it does not believe that it will ever return and consequently permits itself an extravagant valediction in a huge ritual of colour. The silence of twilight is striking because the flourish of the colouring has the grandeur of music.”

