

August 1, 2024

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

SACRED ECHOES

By Julie Mussché

A Quote

*"The clouds and the mist
And a hundred scenes created
Moment to moment"*

BASHO, 1684

Reflection

Over the spring, I watched the newly produced television series *Shogun*. I had read the book many years ago and also watched the made-for-TV movie in the 1980s. The most current narrative was almost entirely in Japanese and while the filming location was primarily in or around Vancouver, the program strongly reminded me of my time living in Japan as a child. Listening to the subtleties of spoken Japanese, the inflections, cadence, and gender differences in gutturalization, really surfaced sights and sounds of past time.

As shared in prior reflections, my family lived in a dependent housing area located on a peninsula with views of both Tokyo Bay and Sagami Bay and Mt. Fuji. The name of our housing area was Admiralty Heights, which later became Nagai Heights; we were close to the fishing village of Nagai and surrounded by agriculture. The scenery in Japan is dramatic, outlined by volcanic elevations, surrounded by the sea, the landscape peppered by fields and villages as well as densely structured cities. And the people are gracious and hospitable, and delighted by children, even hyperactive ones such as myself.

In my recent reminiscing, several images percolated up: the pulsating lights and sounds of the pachinko machines in the Ginza district in Tokyo; the Emperor's Gardens and Imperial Palace in Kyoto; the Kamakura Buddha; the hot springs in Gora; Mt. Fuji; the Shinto shrines to the deceased found in caves along the shoreline where we children explored; and the balanced architecture of both Buddhist and Shinto Temples throughout the island nation.

It was probably my experience in Japan that helped to raise my awareness of our intimate connection with place, the relational aspect between humanity and sacred space and creation, and that God is infinite and beyond just my definition. Our placement in both time and place helps define who we are, the context of our awareness and interpretations of that through language and thought, and our appreciation of the mystery and indescribable beauty of phenomena such as seasons, light, gravity, weather, landscapes, and the sensory experiences of earth and atmosphere. It also buttresses our sense of and belief in the Divine. One example: mountains figure into the religious cosmologies of many cultures having sacred interpretations and traditions.

Pope Francis reminds us that, "If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters..." (*Laudato Si*, 11) Certainly, words to hold and take to heart.



Wooden Sculpture
Photo by Julie Mussché

For Pondering

- How would you describe your relationship with place and creation?
- How have your relationships opened up your heart to awe and wonder?

For Prayer

*Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.*

POPE FRANCIS, A PRAYER OF THE EARTH, LAUDATO SÍ

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