



Nature & Haiku

By C. Peter Van Gorder

I don't know about you, but I have to spend some time in nature every once in a while or I lose my perspective and composure.

One of my favorite pastimes on outdoor walks is to let nature speak to me. As the Biblical psalmist says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge." (The Bible, Psalm 19:1–2 NIV.)

Nature has a beautiful way of talking to us. I am often inspired to put these "conversations" into haiku, a Japanese form of poetry which begins with a word picture inspired by nature, and is completed in the imagination of the reader. A haiku shares the deeper experiences of life through what we observe in nature, in only 17 syllables.

RAIN AND PAIN

One morning after a heavy rain, I walked down a hill and saw the sun shining through raindrops that were resting on blades of grass. The diamond effect the sunlight created was magnificent.

*Diamonds on the grass.
Yesterday's rain is today
A glistening gem.*

The psalmist put it like this: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5 NKJ). With time our suffering takes on a new perspective. Through it we can become a little wiser and a little more compassionate toward others who are suffering.

YET NOT

Another lesson from nature was gleaned on the way to visit my daughter who was in the hospital. In a park my wife and I saw an amazing old oak tree. Its branches were gnarled and jutted out in every direction imaginable, with no apparent rhyme or reason. Compared to the order and precision of the buildings surrounding the park, the growth looked haphazard, yet the result was a well-shaped and magnificent tree. Not even the most skilled ballerina could stand so gracefully balanced.

*Oak arms seem to sprawl
In apparent confusion,
Seeking for the light.*

The Bible, in Romans 8:28, says that "all things work together for good to them that love God." My daughter was in critical condition, but I could see that God could take even this sad event and bring about a positive and beautiful outcome, if I, like

the tree, would only keep my face turned to Him.

SLEEPING ORCHIDS

On a visit to my daughter's house, I was amazed to see a pot of spectacular orchids blooming. She explained that for three years she had watered these seemingly dead plants against the advice of friends who said she should throw them away. She had believed that the plants would someday revive and blossom, and they had. I wrote this haiku to commemorate the event.

*Your sleeping orchids,
Loved and watered for three years,
At last are in bloom.*

No one could understand why she kept those orchids around until the day they burst forth in all their glory. The apostle Paul tells us that now we see the spiritual world through a glass dimly—glass that often seems bumpy, and more translucent than transparent. But Paul goes on to say that when we get to Heaven we shall know truth more completely and see spiritual things much more clearly. "Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known" (The Bible, 1 Corinthians 13:12 NKJ).

When we get to Heaven we will graduate to a new form and see the expectation of our hope. We'll see Jesus face to face, and then we'll understand.