

## Beauty, God and Thankfulness

Music: 'What a wonderful world' (Pan Pipes)



Walks along rivers and canals are absolutely beautiful. Serenity and tranquillity are qualities that come to mind when I think of doing such an excursion.

Not very long ago I had a real one, and I would like to share some of that with you.

In fact it was along the river and old Victorian canals in Colne Valley.

First you start off along the water between new housing developments, offices and industrial buildings. Although it's nice enough to look at them, the towpath along the canal is adorned only with a bit of grass along the water's edge, plastic bottles and single use bags floating on the surface of the water.

It raises awareness how thoughtlessly we dispose of the things that can harm the environment. But wait and come along. The scenery will become better and lush as we carry on.

After a while we meet a bridge across the canal. Looking through we see light green trees lit by sunlight with darker green ones either side. One of them in the back is trailing down into the water.

The water itself, in spite of algae spattered over the surface, is like a cracked but beautiful mirror. It reflects back to us the lovely greens and the delicate pattern of the leaves. So, after lingering a moment we move on.

Some time later we cross an iron girder bridge. As we descend, with a low wall to our right, the valley of the

river Colne opens up in front of us. In the shadow to our left a tree and bushes limit our view. On the other side of the river shrubs and trees line the silver band of water we follow. A mirror outline of the vegetation shadows the glittering river. We stay for a while to take in the views. Then we continue on our journey.

It is really quiet along here. No sounds interrupt, except our own breath. In, out, in, out, in, out ... we let go of tension, confusion, annoyances and fears. Gently walking on we meet a bend in the river. Looking back it looks like a tranquil lake surrounded by trees, bushes and a grassy verge along the path. In the middle a grey blue sky leaves its mark in the river like a pool of sparkling silver surrounded by emeralds and jade.

Further on we walk along the Grand Union Canal.

Grand Union, a statement of bringing things together. What greater union can there be than God becoming one with us and we with God. How still the water here is. It creates a perfect mirror to reflect the beauty of the longboats floating on it.

This makes me wonder: how do we reflect the perfect beauty of God? In which way can we see ourselves one and connected with God?

A family of swans breaks the stillness of the water's surface. Two adults and nine cygnets glide past us. All the little ones have survived in an often hostile environment. This reminds me very much of Jesus as the good Shepherd. So the brood of cygnets were very well looked after.

As we are nearing the end of this journey may we be thankful that places like this exist in London. They are the lungs which keep us breathing when the noise and smell of the city get too much. They are the places where we can find the heart of God: a mirror to see how we can be one with him/her, a spot where we can see also the reflection of God within ourselves.