



## A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEKEND

**17<sup>th</sup> March, 2023**

*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

John 14:27

Near where I lived in Devon was a hillside covered with a sea of rhododendrons; in May and June wave upon wave of vivid colour extended up from a path called Rhododendron Walk. I strolled amidst the shades of colour in wonder and gratitude for such beauty, and for the eyes to see it.

It was also a very quiet spot, and as I paused to gaze I became aware of the steady hum of thousands of nectar-seeking insects. I was reminded of a line from the Irish poet W. B. Yeats. His poem, 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' includes the phrase, *"the bee-loud glade"*, an evocative image in a poem which expresses a longing for peace and tranquillity.

Years before, in London, I often enjoyed rhododendrons and azaleas in Kew Gardens, Richmond Park or Savile Gardens. There were buzzing insects there too, but their peaceful sound was drowned by constant traffic noise, the planes in the Heathrow flight path, the trains and the hum of city life. It was never really quiet enough to hear them.

Perhaps your own situation is crowded with busy-ness and 'noise', and there is little chance to pause and find a moment quiet enough to hear the sounds of silence. Yeats' poem continues: *"And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow..."* I wonder if 'peace comes dropping slow' for many of us, in lives where the 'volume' of so many things is turned up -literally and metaphorically- drowning the quietness needed for inner awareness and deeper reflection and the 'head-space' for 'cultivating the inner life'.

It was for good reasons that God ordained a day of rest in every seven; and that the history of his walk with humanity is marked with times for peace, for silence, for *rest and restoration*, not just for body, but for mind and soul and heart (think of Elijah in 1 Kings 19). And it was also for good reasons that Jesus *"often withdrew to lonely places to pray"* (Luke 5:16). I need that, and no doubt you do too, -away from 'noise', and from all that shouts and bleeps and buzzes its demanding way into our consciousness, and won't let us find peace and simply, deeply... *rest*, -with God, *in* God. As St. Augustine had it, *"...our hearts are restless until they rest in you."*

In this season of Lent we hope for times when we will be able to find some space for restorative tranquillity. Yeats' poem ends with the line: *"I hear it in the deep heart's core"*. There is a peace, and a communion with God that we can only access when our 'deep heart's core' is given opportunity. But amidst the noise and demands of life such opportunity may have to be sought or *made*... scheduled, fought for, and protected!

Jesus says to us, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives."* (John 14:27)