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China

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China

When we think of China, we might have in mind the nation that is the most populous on earth. Most of us are also quite familiar with "china" as a name for tableware, even some that does not really come from China. In a similar way, we might talk about religious as persons belonging to a named group in particular, or to people who either talk about or show some indications of having transcendent experiences.

We can reflect on how we ourselves use familiar words to bear different levels of meaning in describing our own inner experiences of wholeness or deep inner peace. We might employ words such as faith, hope or love that are often used in a religious context, or we might choose other words to convey some of the content of our experiences. We are not obliged by a set of rules when attempting to identify for ourselves, or to communicate with others, about the sometimes amazing and at other times puzzling, thoughts and feelings within us that seem to have a source beyond or outside us.

Just as China can stand for a huge nation or for sets of plates and cups, we can talk about faith as representing an accepted statement of beliefs or we can mean that we trust, regarding particular interior experiences, that whatever happened was beneficial and cause for gratitude. At different times in our lives we might have had quite significant experiences, and at other times, some of seemingly small consequence. We cause or initiate neither kind; rather, we receive and accept them, or ignore and deny that anything could happen within us that we do not initiate or control.

If we take some time to reflectively look through our past, and recall some of the special experiences we have had, their quality is most important, not their quantity. Some are like the finest china found in our parents' homes, and others are more like every-day "china," but all are intended to hold nourishment for us, which sustains our lives. We can become increasingly aware of their beneficial impact on our lives as we recall and acknowledge the gifts we have received and savor them and reaffirm their present relevance for us.

Many of us have had one or more personal revelatory insights which enabled us to make valuable life-changing decisions. Even if we have never told anyone about our experiences and received verification that we were "not the only ones," we can still recognize within ourselves the power and influence of interior events that have happened recently or perhaps several years ago. We might, for example, recall an "accident" that, as we reflect, appears to us to have had a definite and caring purpose behind it. We are

free to decide whether or not to believe that God could or would touch us in unique and particular ways.

Personal experiences of God are far more valuable than the finest china or any other material thing that can be found in China.