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## Sunsets

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## Sunsets

Many of us enjoy watching a sunset, whether on the coast, in the mountains, or in the middle of an urban area. Besides admiring the beauty of colors and the play of light and shadow on clouds, land forms and buildings, we often identify with thoughts of completion and of change from one manner of living to another; we might also experience unnamed affective stirrings inside us. Sunsets often bear meanings for us which go far deeper than the sum of all the thoughts that occur while we watch the sun move below our field of vision.

Beauty does not need our permission to exist; we can enjoy it or not, as we can choose to watch a sunset or ignore it. Neither do we create the beauty we find in the natural world. We can observe it, let ourselves be affected by what we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. We can allow our internal senses to be moved with appreciation, awe, curiosity, and other movements. Our choices in the presence of a sunset or any phenomenon outside us are to either engage or to disregard, but we do not make it happen. We do not put the sun to bed as we might send a child off for the night. Lovely gifts, not of our making, have been prepared for us and placed where we can readily find them.

There is something attractive about a sunset but perhaps also something sad for us, such as a reminder of a scarcely hidden painful memory of a person or an event. As we are not in control of the sun or of most other events we observe, neither do we have command over the feelings that take place within us in response to the beauty found in nature and in human creativity.

A sunset or a familiar piece of music might evoke a feeling of well-being at one time, yet on another occasion, we could find to our surprise that our eyes have gentle tears in them. We are capable of being moved in different ways depending upon the significant matters going on in our lives at the time when we encounter something beautiful. If we have lost a loved one recently, or have consciously or unconsciously been considering our own mortality, a sunset or even a short bit of birdsong might strike us as somehow both beautiful and sad. We spontaneously but unconsciously interpret from within, whatever we receive from our physical senses.

Our spirits and our flesh are bound together closely in a complementary relationship. We do not always have to delve deeply into our thoughts in order to find meaning and purpose in our lives. As

members of a gracious and personally oriented creation, we can allow our spirits to respond freely to some of what we observe, and thereby change for the better. We do not have to understand in detail all that takes place. But we can choose to allow the perceptions of our hearts that accompany those of our physical senses help to clarify and give focus to some of our abiding concerns.

In creation, God provides more options for our benefit than the use of pure reasoned logic. We can watch a sunset, for example, and attend to the gentle and subtle combinations of thoughts and feelings as well as those that are overt and clear. Our decision to observe with openness is an affirmation of our willingness to be part of something greater than ourselves, an honest touch of humility.

We do not make every good thing happen by our own powers. Rather, we are beneficiaries of the ongoing creative power of Love.