

Heaven Haven

This time, as I approached Lizard Head Pass, a poem came immediately to mind. Its sudden presence surprised me, like running into an old friend on a trip back home. The first time I traversed this pass, its beauty so inspired me with awe that I had to stop and get out and stand in its presence as every voice and word fell silent. On this trip, late last April, I left Telluride reveling in the bliss of securing a call, and then the poem:

*I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.*

*And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.*

Gerard Manly Hopkins wrote *Heaven-Haven* to commemorate the assuming of vows by a group of nuns. The poem was to echo their call to the quietude and solitude of the interior life. I had committed the poem to memory some years before as an echo of my own desire to secure some inner space as I approached a difficult passage. I was headed to Alaska to assume a different call, chaplain for a group of chaplains and the young men and women whom they and I would serve as we prepared and deployed to Iraq. I anticipated little beauty or peace through this deafening passage where storms indeed come and fly their sharp and sided hail, and so hoped my inner life would sustain, where streams not fail and a few lilies blow.

So, when the words returned, it was this place that spoke them to me now. The words that held me to that space within, now echoed in hills and fields and streams of this place. How fortunate we are to experience externally what we might hope also to know internally. And it should be like that, both together, echoes of the one Spirit who has created that essential truth both within and without. Of course, we know too that life doesn't always allow us immediate access to the beauty of our surroundings and can even take us through sometimes desolate landscapes, and that even in the verdant lap of nature we can be closed to the inner space where God also dwells.

May we all come, more and more, to experience the in-side and out-side of sacred presence. And may this beautiful place we live (and live in) inspire us, and through us, inspire others.

Grace and Peace,
Pat Bailey
(Pastor En-Route)

