



OPEN UP TO WONDER

Posted on August 1, 2023 by Blanche Streb



Blanche Streb is a mother, essayist and columnist, who holds a doctorate in pharmacy. She has just written a remarkable book, *Grâce à l'émerveillement* (*Because of Wonder*) which invites us to rediscover our sense of wonder that can allow us to embrace life with enthusiasm, as we marvel at the mystery of being. Through the kind courtesy of [La Nef](#), we are happy to bring you an excerpt.



The times we live in are fascinating and worrying. More and more technology, more and more speed, more and more so-called rights, more and more material goods. And yet... ever less time, ever less meaning, ever less hope. So much so that all around us, and within us, temptations to flee the present are multiplying—by becoming dizzy in the hustle and bustle or in front of our screens, by taking pride in our illusions of mastery and possession, by hardening ourselves in jadedness, by dozing off in the drone of what's the point.

And then, one day, we come to realize that the misdeeds we deplore are first and foremost causes to be combated, rather than effects to be lamented. And we feel an inner act of resistance emerging. No! cries out our whole being. I don't want to sink into indifference. I don't want to miss out on my life. I don't want to give in to swan-songs or those of sirens, I don't want this ordeal to take everything with it. I'm here, alive. And I want to live fully, here and now.

Blanche Streb



Grâce à l'émerveillement

LA FOI AU CŒUR
SALVATOR

In this world thirsting for meaning and hope, there is an eternal science of life to be (re)discovered today, a sovereign antidote to the disenchantment and cynicism that plague our times—Grace and the power of wonder. This intuition that precedes us, we all have already perceived its presence and active force in the corners of our lives. For this is a science reserved neither for the wise nor the learned, neither for children, nor for the spoiled-of-life. On the contrary, it is the inspiration of inspirations that wishes to pass through each and every one of us, whatever our gifts or what we do, in the brightness as well as in the discretion, in the small things and small nothings of everyday love.

Wonder is an innate disposition of the human heart. Some are richly endowed. Others are meagerly endowed. Some people, because they have lived through a profoundly "transforming" experience or even come close to the end, rediscover this science of life. It's as if the nearness of death gives rise to an urgency to live. As if consenting to the end were in fact consenting to everything that needs to be

lived.

Wonder seizes us, in the banality as in the extraordinary of our lives, and plants a seed of enthusiasm that delicately deflects our trajectory, breathing new life into us, giving a different consistency, substance and depth to what surrounds us, lives within us and around us. Wonder is not a simple, silly or childish emotion. It's not an escape from the real world, but a doorway to the essential. It is lived in a sharpened awareness, capable of seeing beauty where it is, but also the goodness of acts and people, courage, fortitude. It doesn't erase hardship or make the ordinary wonderful, but allows us to see the marvelous in the ordinary, the new in the familiar, the possible in the existing. It keeps our eyes from losing the grace to open up to the world each time as if for the first time. This gift of wonder enables us to see beyond what we see, beyond nature and its laws, to glimpse that the world is not limited to the visible, and that reality is vaster than we think. Through it, we gain access to another kind of Knowledge, far higher than the one lurking in our wherewithal—and to an encounter with the Other. This gift of wonder can be summed up in four words—do not be indifferent. And more than anything else, it's up to us to open the door to it, to choose to live it, to cultivate it.

At the end of this month, the Church celebrates Pentecost. The coming of the One promised to us from all eternity. The One who strengthens and comforts us. He nurtures in us the spiritual flair that clears our path and helps us discern between what to seek and what to flee, what to love and what to hate. Where we must think big—for nothing is impossible for God—and where we must remain small—for we are neither perfect nor all-powerful. I deeply believe that many of the evils of our time would vanish if only our disposition served His gifts. In them lies what can heal so many wounds and think of ways to guard against them. These are not easy times. The moral and spiritual crisis we are going through is real and profound. It leads to so many lies, illusions, irresponsibility and absurdities. "This era demands of us a spiritual conflagration," wrote Solzhenitsyn in 1978 in his famous Harvard speech.

Nothing counts more than human faculties and virtues, to steer our soul. Wonder is one of them. A powerful faculty. It gets us off the couch, out of our egos. We don't marvel at ourselves, or only through a Grace we feel has passed through us, but for which we know we were neither the source nor the completion. Yes, let us dare to say to Grace—Come, enter my home! It's at work, it's (working) on us. These small steps of God in our lives can only make us more confident and "hopeful,"

There are so many aspirations that seek their way into the depths of our clogged souls—the desire for the good, the beautiful, the worthy; to be more, better, happier; to serve, to progress. Let's set them

aglow. Let's turn them over to God. It's going to be contagious.

Featured: *Morgen im Riesengebirge (Morning in the Riesengebirge)*, by Caspar David Friedrich; painted ca. 1810-1811.
