

The Gift of People



If “hell is other people,” as

Sartre concluded, then maybe heaven is too.

Every once in a while we meet someone who leaves an indelible and transforming mark on us. They can be longtime friends, casual acquaintances, or people who cross our path one time only. They can leave us with good or bad memories, yet the effect they have on us is profound, often for reasons we don’t understand. In the rarest and most blessed moments of our life, encounters with such people can serve as signposts that point the way into the Kingdom of Heaven.

I recall a visit to a monastery long ago, and the face of an Orthodox monk who was seated by a window in a small library. He looked up from his book and greeted me with a warm and gracious smile. I don’t remember the few words he spoke, or even the specific subject. What I do remember is his face, what the French call the “regard.”

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