

THE GIFT OF A SMILE

Merci to Stephanie Wolkin

Provence, one of the best-known regions in southeastern France, is filled with exotic sights and sounds. The bright fuschia of bouganvillea cascading down the sides of buildings and stone fences, the pungent aroma of fish soup, the glistening smooth surfaces of handcrafted olive wood bowls -- all can be found in abundance in Provence.

I was fortunate to visit this part of France in July and came away with wonderful memories of the region and its people. Perhaps no town embodied the spirit of Provence more than Eze. Sunbathed and nestled into the picturesque mountainside, Eze offers a quiet sanctuary from the fast lane lifestyle of nearby Monaco. The following poem, which I found tacked onto the wall of a side chapel in the church at Eze, speaks to the outlook and attitude of the Provencal people.

Le Don du Sourire

Il ne coûte rien et produit beaucoup.
Il enrichit celui qui le reçoit
sans appauvrir celui qui le donne.
Il ne dure qu'un instant,
mais son souvenir est parfois immortel.
Un sourire, c'est du repos pour l'être fatigué,
du courage pour l'âme abattue,
de la consolation pour le coeur endeuillé.
C'est un véritable antidote
que la nature tient en reserve
pour toutes les peines.
Et si l'on refuse le sourire que vous méritez
soyez genereux, donnez le vôtre.
Nul, en effect, n'a autant besoin d'un sourire
que celui qui ne sait pas en donner aux autres.

The gift of a smile

It costs nothing and produces a lot.
It enriches the person who receives it
without impoverishing the person who gives it.
It lasts only an instant
but its memory may last forever.
A smile gives rest to the weary person,
courage to the battered soul,
comfort to the heart in mourning.
It is a cure
that nature holds out
to all pain.
And if someone refuses the smile you give
be generous, give them yours.
No one has more need of a smile
than the person who doesn't know how to give one
himself.