

A few words from the Vicar

*May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back;
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.*

Traditional Gaelic blessing



For much of my working life I've had to commute to work. Queuing in traffic nose to tail during my daily trek into Manchester was never my idea of fun. Neither was standing on the tram all the way from Radcliffe to Manchester pressed together with the other passengers like a bunch of sardines.

These days my commute is the shortest of walks when, with brew in hand, I amble the few short steps from the vicarage kitchen to my study. So I begin my day with prayer and without the stresses and strains of an hour-long commute; without standing pressed against someone on the tram who has 'forgotten' to shower or who feels obliged to run up a massive bill on their mobile phone.

Now, if this is beginning to sound like a recruiting ad for the stipendiary priesthood in the Church of England, then good – the Church needs people to answer God's call to become priests (stipendiary or otherwise). However, that's not my theme for this month!

The fact is I like travelling. I like visiting new places, trying different foods and experiencing new things and, for me, the journey is very much part of the fun. Taking off from Nice Airport in a thunder storm, heading out over the Mediterranean to gain enough height before turning back to fly over a mountain range – you can't beat it! Gazing out from a train window in the early morning when travelling along the coast from Marseille – you can't beat it!

Even the daily commute can be put to good use. I'd often use it as a time of prayer or a time to catch up on some spiritual reading.

But I guess if you travel for long enough there will be times when things don't go quite so well; like having to swerve to avoid hitting a massive piece of metal falling off the back of a lorry; like taking a wrong turning and getting lost; like having to sleep rough after missing the last train from Paris Nord to Calais or breaking down in the middle of nowhere in rural France.

Well the Christian life is often compared to a journey; a journey that begins at our baptism and ends when we are called home to Glory. Along the way there can be excitement and exhilaration when we experience the thrill of the new or feel particularly close to God. There can be trials and tribulations and times when we take the wrong spiritual turning in life.

As we journey through life it is important to remember that God is faithful and will always be with us no matter where our lifetime's journey of faith takes us.

Sometimes our Christian journey has all the excitement of going on holiday but at other times it feels routine, tedious even; the spiritual equivalent of commuting. But even commuting has its moments!

Many years ago I worked in Chorley and sometimes I would avoid the traffic by driving over the moors and going through Belmont. One day, as I was on my way home, as I passed the Blue Lagoon I was forced to stop by a mother duck leading her ducklings across the road. It was a great antidote to the stresses and strains of work; a reminder that there's more to life than work and making money.

My only regret is that I didn't have a camera with me!

For all of us there are times, long periods even, when our Christian journey feels a bit like commuting. Yet, I know from experience that, even when this is true, if we persist in prayer, if we persist in worship, if we persist in reading our Bibles, then from time to time we will experience those 'duck' moments. Moments of insight, of spiritual refreshment and closeness to God that make the daily routine so worthwhile.

Every Blessing.

Dave