

1st June 2020

Dates

“That, Sire, is a question of dates.”

Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand, as quoted by Duff Cooper in ‘Talleyrand’

I was quite shocked when I turned a page in my calendar yesterday to find that every date in this month was complete blank. I know that June contains important things in our family – our wedding anniversary, my wife’s birthday, our eldest daughter’s wedding anniversary, for example – and it doesn’t need a calendar to mark the significance of these. But meetings, events, plans, concerts, holidays, visits, deadlines, which would normally fill a calendar, were all absent.

April and May had things written in, from way back – regular appointments, one-off happenings, individual plans, shared events – but, one by one, these had gone by the board as our lockdown continued. But here was the first month with absolutely *nothing* ... What a shocker!

How easy it can be to find we are constrained by dates. And, on the flip-side, how difficult it is to build flexibility into our lives. If this crisis has taught me anything, it’s that, while plans are important and organising my time still matters, when I remove *all* flexibility, something is very wrong. I was shocked to see all those blank dates. But there was a little niggling voice saying: “Here’s a fresh start, some spaces in your life, an empty calendar. What would you *really* like to fill it with, and are you going to leave enough blank dates to make sure your life is in balance?”

John Gillespie Magee, in his poem *High Flight*, says this:

*And, while with silent, lifting mind I’ve trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.*

Perhaps if I leave myself enough “untrespassed” space in my life, I might be more aware of the hand of God touching *me*!

A prayer for today

*God of all of my life, give me purpose in my busyness.
Show me the wisdom of leaving spaces which can yet be sanctified.
Let me be aware of your blessing and gentle touch in the stillness. Amen*

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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