

16<sup>th</sup> August 2020

## School

**“At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms,  
And then the whining schoolboy with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school.”**

*William Shakespeare, As You Like It*

Now that children in Scotland are back at school, I’ve been reflecting on my own schooldays. Unlike Shakespeare’s whining schoolboy, I never went unwillingly to school. In fact, I loved every minute of it.

My P7 year was in Banavie Primary School, a mile or so walking distance from my village outside Fort William. In an old-fashioned school, I was taught by an old-fashioned teacher, using old-fashioned methods. There was no central-heating in the school, and the classroom was heated by a large, open, coal-fire. Following tests for spelling, sums and scripture on a Friday afternoon, the order of seating for the pupils was rearranged on a Monday morning, with the successful ones at the back, and the not-so-bright ones at the front, the last being seated right next to the draughty door. Combine these two facets of P7 life, and there was a “double-whammy” for what happened, sadly, to be the same person for the whole year – bottom-of-the-class *and* stuck in the coldest seat in the room.

Jesus told a story, not of a P7 classroom, but of a feast, where those who thought they were most deserving took the best seats at the top of the table. But the host wanted equity and not privilege, so he took the people from the bottom and put them at the top, and he told the people at the top to get to the bottom, so that the whole thing was fairer.

In our classrooms, as at society’s feast-tables, let’s make sure everyone has a fair chance. If the brightest and most successful ones took a turn sitting by the draughty door, perhaps they would work doubly hard to create equity for all, and everyone would be the better for it.

### **A prayer for today**

*Loving God, when you invite me to come to your table, please forgive me for pushing my way to the top. And when you place me where you want me to be, give me the humility of acceptance, the pleasure in togetherness, and the understanding of the need for fairness for all. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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