

**29<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

## **Footprints**

**"Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time."**

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, A Psalm of Life*

Today's reflection was stimulated by a photograph taken by one of my daughters on a beach near North Berwick, a simple line of footprints in wet sand. It would be such an image that set off Longfellow's train of thought which produced his poem from which the verse above is taken.

A day or two earlier, a friend had reminded me of the best known "footprints" story, which is, in fact, almost like a prayer. It runs like this:

*One night I had a dream ... I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord, and across the sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; One belonged to me, and the other to the Lord. When the last scene of my life flashed before us, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that many times along the path of my life, there was only one set of footprints. I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in my life. This really bothered me, and I questioned the Lord about it. "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you would walk with me all the way; but I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why in times when I needed you the most, you should leave me." The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child. I love you, and I would never, ever leave you during your times of trial and suffering. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."*

We'll interpret that in our own way and take strength from it for our own journey of life, and in our commitment to help others on theirs. But let's not forget Longfellow's image too, and make sure that people will want to follow "the footprints on the sands of time" we leave behind us, with purpose, love and faith.

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, help me leave footprints that will help others. And, when I'm struggling, help me follow the footprints good people have left on the sands of time for me. Amen.*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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