

4th September 2020

Helpful

“Oh I get by with a little help from my friends.”

John Lennon and Paul McCartney, With a little help from my friends

Several years ago, when my wife and I were on holiday with friends in Tuscany, we chose one evening to eat in a restaurant in a nearby village which was new to us. The *ristorante* was busy, but a table was found for us and the menus passed round – *all* in Italian. We managed to decipher some of the items, but most of it was beyond us, and our waitress didn't have a word of English. “What's that?” I asked, pointing a stubby finger at *struzzo* on the menu. She shrugged, smiled, shook her head ... then turned and shouted to the pizza chef on the other side of the restaurant, “Miro! Miro!” followed by a string of unintelligible Italian – probably along the lines of “Help me out, Miro. I've got a bunch of right ones here!” And, to our astonishment, the helpful Miro shouted back, in impeccable English – and with a Scottish accent – “Tell them it's ostrich!”

And that's the way it was for the rest of our enjoyable evening – questions from us and answers through Miro. It turned out that the helpful Miro had worked for many years in the delicatessen business in the west of Scotland and had just come home. When things quietened down, he joined us at our table, to share *grappa* with us, reminisce about the parts of Scotland he loved, and to wish us well on the rest of our vacation.

Miro was helpful. It was in his nature. He helped a floundering waitress. He helped five confused tourists. He helped his family's business. He helped me by giving me a story I never tire of telling.

Who are the pizza chefs in your life, helpful when you need them? And who can you be helpful to today, when life is uncertain, language is difficult, confusion is a burden, and enjoyment might be limited? Where are the helpful people when you need them? Maybe they're standing at the pizza oven with Miro, shouting “ostrich” to some grateful tourists ...

A prayer for today

Loving God, where I have questions, may someone help me with the answers. Where I have answers, may I help someone with their questions. When help is needed, may I not turn aside, but be there, helping, when I'm called upon. Amen

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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