

17th October 2020

Sit

“For God’s sake, let us sit upon the ground ...”

William, Shakespeare, Richard II

There’s a word that’s been used in our family for many years, and I don’t know whether it’s a proper Scots word or something that was made up by a family member generations ago. It’s the word *sitootery*, describing a place where you can “sit oot”, or sit out, and enjoy the open air. It can be used to describe a patio area, or decking, or even a pavement café. *Al fresco*, the Italians would say, but I like *sitootery* much better.

Shakespeare called for people to sit on the ground and “tell sad stories of the death of kings”. I would call for people just to *sit*, anywhere, and not feel they have to tell stories about anything at all ... Just sit!

Often attributed to Mark Twain, this appeared in the satirical magazine, *Punch*, in 1906:

Sometimes I sits and thinks, and then again I just sits.

Despite Covid-19 restrictions which mean I *physically* don’t run around as much as I used to, I’m still busy – things to do, plan, remember, write. But I’m learning just to sit, give myself some space, even for a few moments, not to read, pray, meditate, or think about anything in particular, but simply to sit and be still. I spent time in a small church recently in an hour set aside for private prayer, just sitting ... Wonderful!

T S Elliot included these lines in his poem *Ash Wednesday* in 1930:

Teach us to care and not to care; teach us to sit still.

Elliot’s words speak to me, not of giving up caring, but, instead, learning to care for ourselves by sitting still, resting and being calm.

One of the first things we train a dog to do is to sit – before “paw” or “lie down” or even “roll over” – because, to deal with the frantic jumping, running around excitedly and expending of energy, we need the dog to be under control, to wait, to be ready. Might we train ourselves to do likewise? Let’s find our *sitootery*, sit ourselves down and just be ...

A prayer for today

*Sometimes I sits; sometimes I thinks; sometimes I prays;
and sometimes, I might be aware of a deeper, holy presence. Amen.*

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