

1st January 2021

Future

**“Ah, fill the cup: what boots it to repeat
How time is slipping underneath our feet:
Unborn tomorrow, and dead yesterday,
Why fret about them if today is sweet.”**

Edward Fitzgerald, The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

Happy New Year, everyone. May God’s blessing be real for you all in 2021, and may this year bring you the joy, peace and love you hope for.

The month of January is named after Janus, who, in Roman mythology, is the god of beginnings, gates, transitions and endings. Janus is depicted with two faces, one looking to the past and the other to the future. And Janus is a metaphor of where we are all likely to be as 2021 dawns for us. As one year gives way to the next, we too will look both ways. But there’s no portrayal of Janus that finds him looking back in tears or joy. And, as he looks forward, there is no emotion portrayed either. He just looks – stoically, impassively, thoughtfully, perhaps. But it’s as though he’s simply prepared to make the best of what comes along.

L P Hartley wrote in *The Go-Between*, “The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.” But isn’t the future also an unknown, unexplored foreign country? They may do things differently there too, but we don’t know that yet. And we’ll never know, until we take our first tentative steps on our journey of exploration. The past 12 months have taught us we need to be ready for the unexpected. So, like Janus, it’s enough just to look and be prepared for whatever comes along.

At the inauguration of the Faculty of Science in the University of Lille in 1854, Louis Pasteur said: “Where observation is concerned, chance favours only the prepared mind.” So, let your minds be prepared to turn 2021 into a year of hopefulness. You have a chance to do that.

So, as Edward Fitzgerald suggests, don’t let time slip under your feet. Yesterday is dead! Tomorrow is unborn! But today – the first day of the rest of your life – might just bring you all the sweetness you’ll ever need.

A prayer for today

God of my past, thank you for taking me to this place.

God of my future, thank you for your promise of lasting companionship.

God of today, thank you for being with me as I start again. Amen

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