

13th February 2021

Coldness

**“A cold coming they had of it, at this time of year;
just the worst time of year to take a journey.”**

Lancelot Andrewes, Of the Nativity (1622)

Yesterday was the first anniversary of the death of a good friend, and I wasn't looking forward to it at all.

The morning was taken up with a trip to a local hospital for my Covid vaccine (which I'll reflect on at another time) and on a crisp, dry winter's day, with snow still on the ground, I took a detour on the way home, and stopped outside a little country church I know well in the village of Athelstaneford, with a view to spending some thinking-time in the churchyard. The graveyard round the church was under a foot of snow, with only a few footprints to be seen along with a couple of dog tracks, so it was clear that few people had been there in recent days.

I know no one who has been laid to rest in this little cemetery. My friend isn't buried there. The church is closed because of Covid restrictions. A winter chill was everywhere. So I expected the place, the moment and my heart to be cold and empty. But, remarkably, I felt quite the opposite.

This was a place of warmth, and not frostiness. Here was a moment of delight, and not of gloom. In my heart was a feeling of peacefulness, and not of sadness. In the coldness of a winter's day, there was the warmth of gratitude and admiration, not only for my friend, but for everyone whose unique life was marked by a headstone in these church grounds. In the coldness of loss, there was the warmth of memory, and I trudged through the snow with my friend as close to me as my breath in the frosty air. In the coldness of my journey, with the anniversary of a death making it the worst time of year, I was touched by the blessings of goodness.

Coldness? Not there, not then, and not now as I write this. The cold may return. There may be worse days which turn up for no reason. A "cold coming" may be mine to face on my journey at another time of year. But for now, as I give thanks to God for the unique value and purpose of every life, I'm happy to be embraced by the warmth those lives still offer me.

A prayer for today

*Lord, in the coldness of Winter, remind me of the hopefulness of Spring.
In the coldness of grief, help me to remember the promise of better days. Amen*

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>