

14th March 2021 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

Travelling

“Travelling is the ruin of all happiness.”

Fanny Burney, Camilla (1782)

It wasn't the bad experiences in the travels of the 18th century English novelist and diarist, Fanny Burney, which caused her to make the dramatic statement above. It's simply that, having visited Italy, she tells us, she couldn't see the point of going anywhere else! "There's no looking at a building here [wherever she was] after seeing Italy," she wrote. Having visited Italy myself, I can understand the sentiment. Many, however, would rightly disagree, for while appreciating the beauty of Italy, or anywhere else, they would *not* wish to confine their enjoyment to one place alone.

As we move through the Season of Lent, we are, as Christians, on a journey. To counter Burney, we've been assured often enough that:

Travel broadens the mind.

Our Christian journeys, properly travelled, also do just that. Here we are, travelling a road we've chosen, through familiar territory, over the forty days of our preparation for Easter. We needn't say what my grandchildren *actually* said to their parents as they set off on holiday, ten minutes into a two-hour journey, "Are we there yet?" We know what the destination will be, and we know it will take a while. We still have some travelling to do.

So if we've already taken issue with Fanny Burney and decided there *is* a point in travelling *to* somewhere, and not being content with where we are and what we know, can we not see the value of the Lenten journey? This is and should be a time where our travelling with Christ "broadens the mind", makes us think about what matters, helps us grow in faith, sees us let go of the past, and be more willing to grasp the meaning of the Easter message. As Christians we can never believe that "travelling is the ruin of all happiness" when moving on this journey of discovery is so challenging, enlightening and rewarding.

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in *Virginibus Puerisque*, "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive." We've not arrived anywhere yet. So let us travel hopefully, and let the journey of Lent continue to matter.

A prayer for today

Broaden my mind on this journey, Lord, that I might see you and know you better, and be more able to understand your challenge, goodness and love. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>