

12<sup>th</sup> April 2021

## Aloud

**“She was, when a child, much against the Bishops, and prayed to God to take them to him, but afterwards was reconciled to them. Prayed aloud, as the hypocritical fashion was then, and was overheard.”**

*John Aubrey, Brief Lives, 'Katherine Philips'*

I know nothing of the Katherine Philips to whom the 17<sup>th</sup> century's John Aubrey refers or why she might have a dislike of Bishops. But I *do* know that while her praying aloud might have been seen as the “hypocritical fashion” of the day, I see no reason why it might not be encouraged now.

One of the people to whom I've been sending my “Thought for the Day” told me recently that she likes the little prayer at the end. “It's short,” she said. “I make it my prayer at the start of each day. And what's more, I say it out loud.” Someone else told me a while ago that these little prayers are as much as they can manage at the moment. A little prayer, easily managed, and, at least in one case, spoken out loud. I like that!

Some things are meant to be read aloud. The poems and stories of A A Milne are like that for me, as is the poetry of Rudyard Kipling. And have you ever tried reading aloud the words of a favourite hymn rather than just singing it on a Sunday? It's amazing what's in the meaning of a piece when you hear the words spoken – even just speaking to yourself.

When I was young and saying my prayers before bedtime, they were said *for* me, then *with* me, and always aloud. As I got older, I was encouraged to say my prayers “into myself”, keeping them unspoken. To be honest, that's never really worked for me. My mind is inclined to wander hither and thither, so that I'm not sure whether I'm praying, or thinking, or just being. I know, of course, that in devotion, our time with God is *all* praying. It's being fully in communion with my God that matters.

*But ...* there are still times when praying aloud is important for me. So, I'll take myself down to the harbour, and in the face of a howling gale or in a tranquil spot, sitting still or walking along, I will speak aloud with God. Perhaps a few words, or a prayer I know by heart, or a simple “thank you”, and even occasionally overheard ... But aloud, sometimes *very* loud, prayers are just different – and there's nothing hypocritical in that!

### **A prayer for today**

*“Sing aloud!” the hymn tells us. “Pray aloud” might also be God's prompting. Amen.*

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