

19th April 2021

Smile

**“What’s the use of worrying?
It never was worthwhile,
So, pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile.”**

George Asaf (George Henry Powell), Pack Up Your Troubles (1915)

My sister is an inveterate knitter! Squares for blankets, baby-clothes, scarves, Christmas stars, stuffed-dolls ... you name it. Give her a couple of balls of wool and a pair of knitting needles, and she’s off.

For long periods during the lockdown, she’s been knitting teddies in a whole variety of colours. I swear there’s a danger of knitted teddies taking over her house! “Breeding like rabbits!” someone remarked. Windowsills, baskets, coffee-tables ... everywhere you look, it seems, another teddy has appeared. All different! All colourful! All great fun!

And, the remarkable thing is ... every single teddy has a smile on its face. Amazing, isn’t it? How does each teddy know that it’s role in life is to smile and make people happy? Remarkable, quite remarkable!

The song, “Pack Up Your Troubles”, from the Great War is an injunction to all of us to smile. We know well enough, of course, that putting smile a on your face doesn’t magically chase away all your worries. Indeed, a smile may continue to mask some deep-seated trouble or concern. Anxieties, fears and troubles can’t be easily dismissed. But, nonetheless, there are times when we have to smile in the face of tragedy, as a reminder to ourselves and others that we will not be defeated by the world’s woes. And there are also times when a simple smile can lighten up the dark places in which someone finds themselves.

In *The Old Vicarage, Granchester*, the poet, Rupert Brooks says this:

*For Cambridge people rarely smile,
Being urban, squat, and packed with guile.*

I don’t know what evidence Brooke had for such a calumny or what he had against people from Cambridge. But I do know the point he’s making. Wherever you come from, what a shame it is if you rarely smile.

Come on! If my sister’s knitted teddies can do it, so can you!

A prayer for today

Just as you smile upon me, Lord, help me to smile for you today. Amen

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