

7th May 2021

Stiffness

**“It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England,
ever since the first compiling of her Publick Liturgy,
to keep the mean between the two extremes,
of too much stiffness in refusing,
and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it.”**

The Book of Common Prayer 1662, The Preface

There can be no doubt that if any institution stays at the extreme end of a spectrum and exhibits “too much stiffness in refusing”, it will have problems adapting to any process of development and change. And, equally, there can be no doubt that if any person – including the writer of this “Thought for the day” – leaves their bike in the garage over the Winter, they should expect some stiffness when they unearth it in the Spring!

My stiffness isn't in refusing! And I assure you I *have* kept up my exercises over recent months. It's just that I'd forgotten that riding a bike strains different muscles or uses muscles in a different way. So, today, after being on my bike again this week, I am stiff – and sore!

Any part of us which isn't in regular use for a while will experience stiffness after it's been put to the test. Do a day's gardening after not bothering for months, and you'll know what stiffness means. Ride a bike, even on the flat cycle-paths of East Lothian, after a long lay-off, and you'll know what stiffness means. Bodies are like that.

Attitudes are like that too. Put our compassion on hold, leave it unused for a time, and it's hard to get it working again. Keep it exercised, make sure it's used regularly, and it's simply easier to go on using it. Kindness, creativity, openness, hospitality, justice, inclusiveness ... Use them regularly, offer them repeatedly, keep them in trim, and they will be easier to use over and over again. Leave them unused? You're sure to experience too much stiffness!

And might the same be true with our spiritual lives? Prayer used regularly, reflection kept in trim, time with God a regular occurrence, mindfulness as part of our daily routine? If not, might we discover we have some unwanted stiffness in our heart and soul too?

A prayer for today

Lord, remind me to keep exercising my soul as well as my body, the spiritual as well as the physical, to keep myself in good shape to serve you better. Amen

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