

25th June 2021

Prayers

**“This was among my prayers: a piece of land not so very large,
where a garden should be and a spring of ever-flowing water near the house,
and a bit of woodland as well as these.”**

Horace, Satires, Book 2, No. 7

Some years ago, I presented a weekly Schools' Religious Service on BBC Radio Scotland. This consisted of music, a story read by an actor, two hymns or songs from a choir or soloist and a time for prayer. I scripted the "linking" parts, and each programme lasted about twenty minutes. The purpose was to allow school classes to participate in weekly worship where they may not have musicians or someone on hand to lead the service.

The Producer felt it would be a good idea to invite children to send in topics for the prayers to be read out on air. We were *inundated*. We got prayers from individuals and whole classes. Some were accompanied by explanatory paintings. And many were simply too personal – and graphic! – for the listening public. But I do remember how honest, immediate and real the prayers were. One child said thank you to God for the new TV mast beside the village so she could see her favourite Cartoons better. A whole class wanted their teacher prayed for because she'd just had a new baby – *and* there was a lot of illustrative material for that. One child thanked God for his favourite (and named!) chocolate biscuit – and for his father who worked in the local factory where the biscuits were made.

The Roman writer, Horace, prayed for a garden, an ever-flowing spring and a bit of woodland. This was on his heart. School children prayed about TV masts, and babies, and chocolate biscuits, because that was what mattered to them. Both point us to the same truth. In our communing with our God in prayer, we should seek honesty, and reality, and immediacy, all of which will, I believe, deepen our relationship with God.

The Talmud suggests that "One should not recite one's prayers as if he were reading a letter." That may well be, but if our prayers were as honest and personal as the prayers in these letters from school children back then, I'm sure God would be happy with that.

A prayer for today

*Dear God, this isn't a letter, but, if you bear with me,
I'll tell you what really matters in my life at the moment ... OK?*

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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