

14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

## Gifts

**“We cannot all be friars,  
and many are the ways by which God leads his own to eternal life.”**

*Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Don Quixote*

The dialogues between Don Quixote on his knightly quests, and Sancho Panza, his long-suffering companion, in Cervantes' 1605 masterpiece, *Don Quixote*, are, for me, among the most enlightening in literature. The quote above comes from a section in which Sancho is asking whether, to get to heaven, we all have to become monks. No, affirms Don Quixote, not at all. For there are many ways to peace and fulness of life.

St Paul turns to this issue in his letter to the Church in Ephesus. In *The Message* translation, one section reads like this:

*That doesn't mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his [her] own gift ... He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work ...*

“We cannot all be friars.” Of course not. But can we not identify, and value, the variety of gifts we all have? And, when we do, are we not all the better for this awareness and understanding?

Back in the 1970s, I worked with a group of young people for a week in the Youth Camp on Iona. There were of mixed abilities, socially, physically and intellectually, but we shared a wonderful week of cooperation, support and understanding. At the end of the week, there was an awards ceremony, the “Oscars” for achievements during the week: best act at the concert, biggest appetite, earliest riser, and several more. The loudest applause was for the “sweeper-upper of the week”, presented to a young lad who'd swept everything in sight – common room, dorms, kitchen, front-steps, showers. You name it, he'd swept it. And why? Because, as he said himself, “At my Day Centre, the lady says I'm good at it. So I do what I'm good at ...” Well said, the lady at the Day Centre.

“Sweeper-upper of the week”? I wasn't at all sure. Because *I'd* have given him an Oscar as “a life-time achievement award” myself.

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, I'm not a friar. I'm just me. Please make the best us of me you can. Amen.*