

29<sup>th</sup> July 2021

## Companion

**“Art thou pale for weariness  
Of climbing heaven, and gazing on the earth,  
Wandering companionless  
Among the stars that have a different birth –  
And ever changing, like a joyless eye  
That finds no object worth its constancy.”**

*Percy Bysshe Shelley, To the Moon*

When the poet, Shelley, looked at the moon, he wondered if, “ever changing” and “joyless”, it was as “companionless” as it appeared. Over the years of my ministry, I have looked with a heavy heart on those who, like Shelley’s moon, are “companionless”. I don’t mean those with no life-partner or who live alone. I mean those who, through force of circumstance or personality, or faced with the rejection of others for some reason, live companionless lives, and who suffer deeply as a result.

A companion, as we know, is someone who accompanies or associates with someone else. The French have the word *compagnon* which means a friend, mate or partner. And this originates from the Latin *companionem* which literally means “bread fellow”, coming as it does from *cum*, meaning “with” and *panis*, meaning bread. So, to be a companion is to be close enough to someone to share bread with them. How sad it is that, even leaving the isolation of Covid aside, there are those around us who know nothing of that kind of companionship.

When Seneca the Younger, the first-century Roman philosopher, was writing his Epistles – which stretched to more than one hundred and twenty letters of guidance on right ways of living – he wrote in a piece entitled “On worldliness and retirement”:

*[Epicurus] says that you should rather have regard to the company  
with whom you eat and drink, than to what you eat or drink.*

Give less thought to your own needs and more to true companionship with those who would benefit from your time and your love. After all, *you* wouldn’t like to be joyless and companionless in a world full of uncaring people, would you?

### **A prayer for today**

*Help me to be a true companion to those who need me today. Amen.*