

28th February 2022

Privilege

**“The privilege and pleasure
That we treasure beyond measure ...”**

W S Gilbert, The Gondoliers

For W S Gilbert in *The Gondoliers*, “privilege and pleasure” was “to run on little errands for the Minister of State”. But I want to reflect today on the idea of “privilege” bringing pleasure in another way. We know the phrase “the privileged few”. This refers, of course, to those who are deemed to be born into privilege, the “silver-spoon-in the mouth” people, where privilege is measured by wealth, class, title, background, education or opportunity. Gordon Brown, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, said in a speech:

It is about time that we had an end to the old Britain, where all that matters is the privilege you were born with, rather than the potential you actually have.

I can't put it better than that. And it doesn't just apply to Britain either ...

But last week I was faced, on two occasions, with another kind of privilege. The first was in a wee *soiree* in someone's home, as the hand of welcome continued to be extended to me in my time on Islay. There were drinks and nibbles, laughter and serious conversation. There were church folk and religious sceptics, old and young. There were fishermen and those who'd never set foot in a boat. I even discovered there were Rangers supporters – and others! But together, there was hospitality, openness, interest and the building of relationships. Here was privilege *and* pleasure. And for that kind of privilege in ministry, once again, I give thanks to God.

The second occasion was in meeting a family before a funeral. We were getting to know each other from scratch. But here too there was the privilege of being welcomed into people's home and their grief, being alongside, listening, helping folk make sense of a tough time. It'll be an even greater privilege to officiate at the funeral in a few days' time, to help build a bridge into a future without a loved one, a crossing into the unknown that will be solid and safe. It's not hard to find privilege in that.

It is a privilege to love, to serve, to be a companion in the good times and the bad. That's the kind of privilege that's worth treasuring. For, therein, there are pleasures aplenty.

A prayer for today

It is a privilege to hear your call, Lord, and to have the pleasure of your company. Amen