

4th April 2022

Prayers

**“He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small.”**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Though the “gender-specific” words above might be an irritation for some, Coleridge’s sentiments express a profound truth about prayer. The best of prayers are a product of the best of our awareness of what is around us.

When I was a hospice chaplain, a survey was carried out with cancer patients on the nature of pain. The conclusion of months of research was this: “Pain is what people say it is.” If I say I’m in pain, then I’m in pain – even if you think I shouldn’t be. My pain is my pain and I need you to understand that. It’s about who I am and how I express myself, not who you think I am or whether I’m expressing myself to your satisfaction.

It’s no different with prayer. My prayers are a product of who I am and what I experience. They’ll always be acceptable, because my prayers are a part of me. And that’s most evident in the prayers of children. In the work with children in my own church, in our “Kids Kirk” and “Youth Kirk”, we use a “Prayer Box”, designed like a pillar box, into which children are encouraged to post their personal and honest prayers. In discussion with the children and young people, the idea had clearly been understood.

Thank you, God, for the universe and creating life.

Dear God, I hope everyone in the world gets what they deserve.

Thank you for Kids Kirk.

Dear God, I pray I can have a happy life.

I hope every one is happy and feels love.

Dear God, you are the best.

Simple? Of course. Honest? That too. Profound? Oh, yes, because these are children who “loveth well” and “loveth best”, and who pray well with the best of prayers. These prayers are part of who they are and how they experience the world around them. Will God understand? Indeed he will, responding with: “Well done, children! And thank you for your prayers.”

A prayer for today

Loving God, this is who I am and how I express myself. Thank you for understanding that.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>