

22nd June 2022

Holidays

“For now I am in a holiday humour.”

William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

The chaos at many UK airports recently due to the cancellation of flights, along with the rail strikes this week, have put holidays on my reflective agenda. The rush to go overseas after the two years of Covid restrictions isn't at all surprising, as many have been deprived of their "normal" holiday pattern for some time. I'm still apprehensive about being in large crowds and in close proximity with strangers for extended periods. So flights, and the like, will have to wait a while to be top of my holiday plans.

I'm close to the end of a short holiday just now which has been built around a family member's "big" birthday. We have a "staycation" planned for July too. So, holidays still matter for me. Even in retirement, a holiday is a break from routine; seeing new places; experiencing different things; spending quality time with loved ones. Yes indeed, holidays matter.

Holidays, of course, come from the idea of "Holy Days", where the Feast Days of the Church would be an opportunity to celebrate and have a break from the routine of drudgery and toil. With this in mind, I was offered a new insight into holidays when I recently read some of the poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The first half of his short poem, *Holidays*, took my thoughts down a new path.

*The holiest of all holidays are those
Kept by ourselves in silence and apart;
The secret anniversaries of the heart,
When the full river of feeling overflows;
The happy days unclouded to their close ...*

No flights; no delays; no chaos; no planning; no postponements – for here is the holiest of all holidays, "kept by ourselves in silence and apart".

How wonderful it is to think that we can go on such holidays even when we're not on holiday! "The secret anniversaries of the heart", "the full river of feeling", in unclouded days. Thanks to Longfellow, I now know I'm going to have a few more holidays than anyone thinks I've planned. I hope that'll be the same for you too. So, "happy holidays" to you all!

A prayer for today

*Holidays? Never apart from the love of God.
Holy Days? Every day I remember God's love. Amen*