

24th June 2022

Contact

“You’re an interesting species, an interesting mix.”

James V Hart & Michael Goldenberg, ‘Contact’ screenplay (as spoken by an Alien)

Some of you will be familiar with *WhatsApp*. I’ll not delve into the technicalities of it here as I’m not sure I could explain it anyway. But it’s a way of keeping in touch with a group of people simply and effectively through sharing messages on your smart phone. Simple? Yes. But effective? Arguable ... OK, it’s effective in the sense that it makes contact easy. But, since we are – as an Alien pointed out in the movie *Contact* – “an interesting species, an interesting mix”, the effectiveness of such a useful communication tool can easily be compromised.

I was recently part of a *WhatsApp* group at a conference that lasted several days. *WhatsApp* was useful: to seek clarification on what had been said; to introduce “newbees” to the subtleties of what was going on; to offer pointers for further exploration. All good stuff. But then it started getting silly: people added extraneous details that took the conversation down a dead end; photos of someone’s coloured socks appeared, followed by more photos of more socks; there was even a discussion-thread about the quality of the lunch. I went to the loo, and when I returned, I had no fewer than 115 *WhatsApp* messages waiting to be read!

We are indeed “an interesting species”, and it’s important to keep in contact with each other – *WhatsApp* messages included. Sometimes that will mean contact is light, verging on the trivial or irrelevant – like some messages on my conference *WhatsApp* group. But let’s be patient with the “interesting mix” of people around us and not be too critical of people’s style of contact. After all, we need to keep the lines of communication open between us so that when people move on from the colour of their socks and the quality of their lunch to more important issues, established contacts are used well.

Sometimes my prayers are about my socks or my lunch. It’s as much as I can handle in my conference with my God. But with the contact established, there’s more than enough time for serious issues to be shared when it really matters. God knows, we *are* an interesting species ...

A prayer for today

Listening God ... that’s my contact, to know you’re there when I need you. Amen