

8th August 2022

Generosity

“[Those] who give only what [they] would as readily throw away gives without generosity; for the essence of generosity is in self-sacrifice.”

Henry Taylor, *Money* (from “Notes from Life”, 1853)

When I was in my first parish, poverty was endemic. At Christmas time, we would appeal regularly to the “wealthier” churches in the city for toys and gifts for local families. People were generous, and every year we had enough gifts to go around. But it was always disappointing to find some used or broken items among the toys, which people were choosing to discard. Where is generosity when the gift was only fit to be thrown away? Where is self-sacrifice when generosity costs nothing?

This came back to me recently when I was dealing with the morning post. Among the letters there were the usual collection of appeals from charities I’d deal with in the past. One of these was from the MND Association UK (see <https://www.mndassociation.org>). I was about to discard the letter, when I recalled a piece I’d seen on TV a few days before. It centred on a remarkable man called Doddie Weir OBE, one of rugby’s most recognisable personalities. Doddie earned 61 caps for Scotland, represented the British and Irish Lions on their successful tour to South Africa in 1997, and won championships with his two club sides, Melrose and Newcastle Falcons. Doddie is suffering from Motor Neuron Disease. From the outset, he’s been driven to help fellow sufferers and seek ways to further research into this, as yet, incurable disease. In 2017, Doddie and his trustees launched the charity, *My Name’s Doddie Foundation*. (See <https://myname5doddie.co.uk>) The number “5” is a reference to Doddie’s playing number for his clubs, Melrose and Newcastle Falcons, and the jersey he wore playing for Scotland. His charity’s vision is simple: A World Free of MND. The appeal letter wasn’t discarded. A gift was given.

Henry Taylor in *Money* says: “When you give, therefore, take to yourself no credit for generosity, unless you deny yourself something in order that you *may* give.” That’s Doddie’s gift to those who live with MND. And me? The bottle of malt whisky I was going to buy for myself will have to wait a while – not a huge self-sacrifice, but a start. Because, when you’re inspired by people like Doddie Weir, generosity is the obvious response.

A prayer for today

Lord, let my giving be a self-sacrifice, just as others give of themselves for me. Amen

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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