

26th October 2022

Starting

“Ab ovo usque ad mala.”

“From the egg right through to the apples.”

(From the beginning to the end of a meal, for example.)

Horace, *Satires*, book 1

There's an oft-quoted catchphrase from the long-running BBC quiz show, *Mastermind*, which was coined by its original presenter, the legendary Magnus Magnusson. If a contestant's time ran out while the final question was being read, he would say immediately, "I've started, so I'll finish."

"Starting" is part of our lives. Routine or new, familiar or different, simple or challenging, starting an enterprise is commonplace. We have a plan, of course, taking into consideration our abilities, preparation, health-and-safety issues, time constraints, and the like. But when we start something, we take into that project a willingness to go through to the end. What's the point of starting something if we're not prepared to give it our all and see it to a conclusion – *ab ovo usque ad mala*?

The process of an activity, once begun, isn't always what we expect. The conclusion, working to the finish, may not have been in the original plan. Indeed, there are times when there is *no* finish, or the ending is beyond us, such that our expectations are unfulfilled. But that surely doesn't invalidate the importance of "I've started, so I'll finish", does it?

I've shared with you before my love of cryptic crosswords, particularly those set by the *Guardian* compilers. I never fail to experience a flutter of excitement when I look at a blank crossword for the first time. It's *full* of possibilities. So I start, believing that I will finish! It doesn't always work out that way. Often I get completely stuck. But what's the point of me picking up a crossword if I don't believe I can do it, make it through to the finish – from the egg to the apples – and know the pleasure of success?

Don't start things you don't believe in. Don't embark on something new for the sake of it or to please someone else. Be properly prepared, and make sure there's a proper plan in place. Then ... go for it. Trust your ability. Give it your all. Aim for the finish! For, after all, isn't that why you began it in the first place? Keep believing in "I've started, so I'll finish."

A prayer for today

*May I be blessed with perseverance to complete the tasks
that have been set for me today. Amen*