13th June 2023

Basics

"Sometimes we get confused between desire and playing football. There is a fine line, and sometimes we could pass the ball to each other a bit better. Football is a team effort and sometimes when you're not playing well together you need to go back to basics and play as a team."

Thierry Henry, *Player Profile, 'Times Online'*

My piece on "hybrid" recently sparked a fair amount of response, particularly around examples of hybrids people knew about: a large decision-making body with 50% of the delegates present "in-person" and 50% participating "on-line" – a workable hybrid; my neighbour's car (not mine, as yet, but watch this space) which is electric but also with a petrol-engine to keep the battery changed – a workable hybrid; in the animal kingdom (not forgetting the proliferation of labradoodles and cockapoos) there's the "wolphin", a cross between a female bottle-nosed dolphin and a male false killer-whale, one of the rarest animals on earth, but clearly – a workable hybrid. And, would you believe it, there is such a thing in the world of cuisine as a "pomato", the grafting of potato and tomato plants – a workable (and sellable) hybrid.

So, where does this get us? It gets us to that place where hybrids clearly work, and, when it's necessary, make things better. It's the "mash-up" principle of the music industry, where the fusion of one style with another can create something which is new, creative and revealing.

But I have a worry, and it's this: if the "hybrid" model becomes the be-all-and-end-all, then the individual parts that make up the hybrid are in danger of being lost or not further developed. If the hybrid of in-person and on-line is continued, might it diminish the importance of having *everyone* together in person and no one on-line at all? If the labradoodles of our modern world are the way forward, I hope that there will still be enough Labradors and Poodles to keep those breed-lines viable.

If "hybrids" in Church life are important, for example, let's not forget – as the great Thierry Henry reminds us – that playing as a team is as much about going back to basics as it is about doing things in new and creative ways. Hybrids have their place. But we also need to remember the basic elements which made the hybrid possible in the first place.

A prayer for today

Back to basics, Lord? You and me, doing our thing, together – and separately too? Amen

An original reflection © Tom Gordon Also available at https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com