3rd April 2024

Butterfly

"Where butterflies dream of the life to come."

Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Sensitive Plant*

Claudio Ranieri, the "Tinkerman" I mentioned yesterday, is an experienced, and successful, football manager. Currently Head Coach with Cagliari in Italy's *Serie A,* Ranieri has managed twenty-two club sides in Italy, France, Spain and England since his managerial debut with Vigor Lamezia in 1986, as well as a spell managing Greece in 2014. Twenty-three positions in thirty-eight years? That's another kind of "Tinkerman", don't you think?

Now, don't get me wrong. Of course there are folk who change jobs regularly. Indeed, there are some in my own family who've done the same. Those changes may be out of necessity or by personal choice, and there will be perfectly good reasons behind them. "Lucky people who can move from job to job," you might say, "when some folk can't get a job at all." OK, I understand that. But I want to reflect for a moment on the "butterfly syndrome" that such constant changes might illustrate.

I don't know whether the "butterfly syndrome" is "a thing" or not. But I do know that I can be inflicted by it sometimes. In one of my annual appraisals as a hospice chaplain, my manager used "butterfly" to describe her perception of my work. While I saw myself as being visible, accessible, responsive to changing needs – and busy – she (and others, she informed me, in the "360° appraisal system") saw me as a butterfly, flitting about, not settling for long, always ready to move on. "It's tiring watching you," she remarked. "I want to see you settled at something for a reasonable spell."

Oops! My visible busyness was being seen by others as "flitting" hither and thither; my constant responsiveness seen as exhibiting the "butterfly syndrome". My availability was one thing, but never appearing to settle for long at one thing at a time was, clearly, quite another.

Thankfully, I've learned that quality matters more than quantity; that the butterfly does good work settled on its chosen flower for a reasonable spell; that tasks given too little attention may achieve little; that our actions shouldn't be governed by the next big thing; that to "dream of the life to come", like Shelley's butterflies, might make us miss out on the value of the life that's here and now. We don't always need to look for constant change.

A prayer for today

Settle me, Lord, when I need to be settled. Help me focus on what matters now. Amen

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