

19<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## Travellers

**“The traveller sees what he sees;  
the tripper sees what he has come to see.”**

G K Chesterton, *Autobiography (1936)* – ‘*The Incomplete Traveller*’

Taoism, an ancient Chinese philosophy, is a religious tradition which emphasises living in harmony with “The Tao”, which is often translated as “The Way” or “The Path”. Perhaps that’s why this is quoted so often: “The journey is the reward.” But as every traveller will know, waiting in an airport for a delayed flight to be called; coping with a crowded train; getting up at the crack of dawn to start a journey; arriving at the dead of night tired and hungry ... seem to give the lie to the assertion that the travelling is better than the arrival, that “getting there” is more important than reaching a destination. But the Taoists knew what they were talking about.

A lot of the end-of-life care in the hospice was around reviewing a life’s journey: looking at significant events; laying aside issues that couldn’t be changed; examining unresolved incidents; smiling at happy memories; weeping too. I often used the metaphor of sitting in a train’s Observation Carriage, where you can see round about you, including backwards, such as the *Rocky Mountaineer* across Canada, the *Jacobite* in Scotland’s Western Highlands, or *The Bernina Express* which I travelled on in the Alps recently. No longer in control driving the train; not in a compartment with the scenery flashing by; but with time to sit, review and talk about what the journey contained. It was often done in a very short a timeframe. But it was important, healing and spiritually fruitful. Often people had left their reviewing too long. The travelling, the journey of life, hadn’t been appreciated, or even thought about. Everything was about the destination – whatever that might be for people – and not the process of getting there.

So why let the scenery flash by too quickly, when it could be enjoyed and reviewed as it’s being travelled through? Why not appreciate the journey, think about it, learn from it while it’s happening, find that it offers its own reward, and let the destination take care of itself?

Like G K Chesterton, you can be a traveller who sees what’s to be seen and appreciates that, rather than a tripper on life’s journey whose eyes are only open to what they expected to discover in the first place.

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, help me to see what I need to see, and to appreciate getting there. Amen*