

21st September

Drivers

**"Little do ye know your own blessedness;
for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive,
and the true success is to labour."**

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881)

My father was a bus-driver all his life in the Lochaber area of Scotland: school runs locally; services to Oban, Crianlarich and Inverness; transporting fishermen from Mallaig to the Morayshire Coast; occasional trips to the metropolis of Glasgow. When I was a teenager, he spent the summers as a "driver-courier" on tours from Glasgow to the Northwest of Scotland and the Inner and Outer Hebrides. He drove a forty-seater coach, often on single-track and windy roads, in order to share the wonders of the Scottish Highlands and Islands with intrepid and eager travellers. And I was sure that everyone on my father's coach could "travel hopefully" because he was a good driver. His passengers felt safe with him.

I thought a lot about my dad on our recent trip around the northern Italian lakes and on our occasional forays into Switzerland, as I developed an overwhelming admiration for our coach-drivers as they navigated their way through narrow village streets, negotiated their coach past roadworks and oncoming trucks, swung round endless, tortuous hairpin bends, and carried us safely along precariously steep mountain passes. We were told by our guide that the drivers had to be careful, especially with the coach's wide wing-mirrors would cost 7,000 euros to replace. Never mind the wing-mirrors, I thought! What about the value of the passengers? But I needn't have worried. Because Giancarlo, Giovanni, Augustus and Marco were *even* more skilful than my father. "Little do ye know your own blessedness"? Not a bit of it! Every one of us was well blessed by these amazing drivers. Whatever our journey we could *always* travel hopefully.

Thank God for people who can transport us safely from place to place. Thank God for skill, care, patience and consideration. Thank God for the trust I have in good people, who do things for me which I can't do for myself. Thank God for all those who serve us well. Giancarlo, Giovanni, Augustus, Marco – and the amazing Jimmy Gordon – I salute you today, for you, and those like you, do a remarkable job for us all.

A prayer for today

You carry me safely, Lord, in the hands of some wonderful people. Thank you. Amen