27th August 2025

Learning

Carpe diem!
"Seize the day!"
Horace, *Odes*

I was never a great Latin scholar. I struggled with *Ceasar's Gallic Wars* and I was no lover of Ovid's poetry. Paterson and McNaughton's *Approach to Latin: Part 1* was an excellent Latin Primer, if only I'd spent more time analysing the Word Study on page 256 rather than clowning about in class.

It's regrettable, I know, especially when I'm in a profession where Latin tags appear from time to time. Latin inscriptions are commonplace in Church buildings, memorials and graveyards – yet, they're all beyond me! And as for the Latin Mass, beloved of many classical composers … I'm always glad there's an English translation in the Concert Programme.

Of course, there are many Latin words and phrases in common usage, and they'll be as familiar to you as they are to me:

- ***Ad infinitum*** – 'to an indefinite degree,' ie endlessly, for ever.
- ***Via Doloroso*** – 'The Way of Sorrow', Christ's journey to Calvary.
- ***Referendum*** – 'something to be referred', used nowadays for the submitting a question to the whole body of voters.
- ***Pro bono publico*** – 'for the public good', ie a service given without payment (usually shortened to *pro bono*).
- ***Per capita*** – 'by heads', ie individually.
- ***Non sequitur*** – 'it does not follow', ie a conclusion that's doesn't logically follow on from what's gone before.
- ***Habemus Papam*** – 'We have a Pope'.

But sixty years after my "Paterson and McNaughton" Latin Primer was binned, would you believe that I've bought myself a "Dictionary of Latin Words and Phrases", for a little light bedtime reading? *Carpe diem* indeed! And, you never know, I may introduce some Latin-inspired erudition to these "Thoughts" in future days. Here's one that caught my eye:

Non scholae sed vitae discimus.
We learn not for school but for life.

So wrote Seneca in his *Epistles.* Maybe if I'd taken Latin more seriously at school, I might have found some aspects of life's learning a bit easier to cope with over the years – *quis scit?* (Who knows?)

A prayer for today

Oh, that's a reminder, Lord – I need to keep learning about God's Word for me. Amen

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