

5<sup>th</sup> October 2025

## Words

**“Grasp the subject; the words will follow.”**

Cato the Elder, *his advice to orators (as quoted in Julius Victor’s, “Art of Rhetoric”)*

I got a present from a friend recently – *The Reader’s Digest REVERSE DICTIONARY: How to find the words on the tip of your tongue*. Now, I’m familiar with how a Dictionary works, and I also use a Thesaurus from time to time. I even occasionally revert to a Rhyming Dictionary for my hymns, poems or songs. But a *reverse* dictionary? This was something quite new.

So far, I have *no* idea how it works. Some research needed, it seems. But from the “Contents” page, I’ve discovered the book has four sections: a) Full list of charts and illustrations; b) Introduction: from the idea to the word (I suspect this is where my research will have to begin); c) The Reverse Dictionary; d) Lexicon of Difficult Words.

So I began at the beginning, and – with the announcement of the new Archbishop of Canterbury in the news – I looked up a “chart” for ... well ... “Clerical Clothing”, and unearthed a cache of useful information: from a mitre, lappet, amice and orphrey, through a chasuble, maniple and dalmatic, to a tunicle, stole, alb and – would you believe it – sanctuary slippers! And here’s me thinking that a clerical collar was enough!

Helpfully, the introduction to this tome reminds us,

Everyone has experienced the frustration of mislaying a familiar word. You know what you *want* to say. You know the precise word exists that would enable you to say it. And you know that you *know* this word. But when you reach for it, it’s not there. That’s when the pantomime of frustration begins.

“It’s on the tip of my tongue,” we cry out in exasperation. And there, for most of us, most of the time, is where the much-needed word remains. If the Reverse Dictionary helps with that, I’m all for it. Indeed – as I touched on a little while ago when I shared thoughts on the use of profanities – *anything* that helps us find the right words, or enhances our communication skills in *any* way, is bound to be worthwhile.

The compilers of this remarkable book suggest it’s “a linguistic treasure-chest”. I hope I’ll be able to pick up some jewels as I rummage through its contents. And I might be able to offer you the occasional ... .. Now, what was that word again? Oh! It’s on the tip of my tongue ...

### **A prayer for today**

*May the words of my mouth, and the thoughts of all our hearts, be acceptable ...*