4th May 2026

Appreciation

"Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good."

Maya Angelou, *Celebrations: Rituals of Peace and Prayer*

The local pub where we hold our weekly traditional-music sessions is quiet in the early days of the week. The Public Bar gets busy if there's a big football match on TV, and the Lounge Bar – where our sessions are – is busy at weekends. But two weeks ago, there was one couple in the Public Bar and only our musicians in the lounge – typical for a Tuesday evening.

We'd been playing for an hour and had just finished a set of jigs and reels, when we were surprised to hear a round of applause from the other end of the bar. Well, "round" of applause is a bit of an exaggeration, for it was only one man, and the applause couldn't be described as loud or lasting. But it was noticed! One of the guitarists shouted, "Just throw money!" A fiddler commented, "It'll be a one-man standing ovation next!" And the accordionist next to me murmured, "Nice to be appreciated!"

And this is the truth: it *was* nice to be appreciated. And for the next hour, one man's applause was offered after every set we completed. Maybe he was following Maya Angelou's guidance, and this was a man's nightly prayer of gratitude – even for a set or two of good music in a pub.

Ministers and priests reading this will know about the occasional "donation envelope" that's given as a "thank you" after a funeral, usually slipped to you surreptitiously in a slightly embarrassed fashion. But I can beat that! I was once in a home for a "small refreshment" after conducting a funeral, when the family had a "whip round", a cash collection, "for the minister's kindness today", with a bundle of notes crushed into my hand. Mortified? You bet I was. But appreciation? There it was, right before my eyes, the kind of appreciation that was given to the comedian at the night-out or the coach-driver on an outing – a thank you, a tangible expression of gratitude. "It's good to be appreciated", is absolutely right.

And you? A prayer of thanks tonight? A word of appreciation to someone? A boost to their confidence? Don't let the day end without giving thought to how grateful you are – even if it's just a smattering of applause for music in your local pub.

A prayer for today

If gratitude is my pillow, then appreciation is my prayer, and thanksgiving is my rest.

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