

The Rector writes...



Since 4th May, when my kidneys failed, my daily routine has been medicalised. I take tablets all the time, have carers who come into the house, and am visited regularly by the community (district) nurses, to manage dressings. Now at home, after nine days in Southampton General, and ten days in the Countess of Brecknock hospice in Andover, I fail to find solace in day-time television, and, awaiting a cataract operation, find it difficult to read... Otherwise, everything else is fine, because of the glorious palliative team who monitor my cancer pain threshold, and I spend each day in a haze of snoozing, and acute insight, like some gothic novelist in the 19th century lying on a chaise-longue, trying to write the latest bon mot...

Without Caroline and her team of family, friends and colleagues, the system of care would fail, and I find my concern about carer fatigue troubling, and try to take up the role of patient, to help not be an extra bother by becoming a worrier, excessively.

I was cheated of saying a formal goodbye to being here, as vicar, (although, on paper, I am still the incumbent), but the 'Desert Islands Discs' evening fulfilled every hope in that regard to put that right. I am deeply grateful to all those who made it possible. I was able to give a final blessing, which, for a priest, has deep significance, as people ask you to bless them and their work and living, throughout one's ministry. It is an intimate privilege. It also has mutual benefit, as those you bless, become a blessing in themselves, and then shed the light of that blessing amongst others. It is a practical expression of how faith and experience works... It can make the world a sweeter place.

Now, in this final column, I can reiterate 'thank you' to you all, who have been loyal readers of this column, over three and a half decades. You have been great to be among, and minister to, with a massive number of individual, personal and corporate life-events, to enjoy together. Now the baton is Sandra's to carry. I know that you will support her throughout, and will help with resources and loyalty to her faithfulness, as a pastor and priest, leader and enabler. She has gifts a-plenty to use and help you with your own vocations, as loving, caring human beings. Go for it!

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