

# Along the track

## Something I Prepared Earlier

Do you remember those cooking shows where the host would mix together all the ingredients and, after popping that into the oven, he or she would produce a perfect dish 'prepared earlier.' No room for mistakes or imperfections, the cake or whatever was without blemish or flaws. But life isn't always like that! In our own way, we strive to be the best we can be but that doesn't always work out as we planned. To an extent, we are all products of what we 'made earlier', what we did in the past, our hopes and dreams, successes and failures.

We are pilgrims on the journey of life. We discover the richness of that journey when we can look back to understand what we have done over our lives and why. We look back to reach a deeper understanding of our actions and motives, to help us understand the highs and lows, the joys and the frustrations of our lives.

A good starting point for reflecting on life is the verse written by one of the author of the psalms: *"You created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. You know me through and through. When I was being made in secret, fashioned in the depth of the earth, your eyes could see my unformed substance. You have made me to be so wonderful. (Psalm 139)"*. If we realise that God has been part of our journey right from the beginning, our reflection on life can take on a different hue. Somewhere in all that has happened, in the good times and the down times, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, the presence of a loving Creator can be found...if we take the time to look. From the very beginning, when God breathed life into the fashioned clay (Gen 2:7), God has moved among us at times like the sound of the gentle breeze (1 Kings 19:10), at times in the movements of nature around us, in the kindness of friends and strangers, in the love of those close to us, in the challenges and blessings of life, in the simple joys of food on the table, a place to sleep, clothing and safety.

Most of us would have heard of the famous saying by Socrates – 'the unexamined life is not worth living'. For Socrates, reflection was essential for a full and rewarding life. Understanding and appreciating that each of us has been made to be 'wonderful' requires some thought too. We don't often think of ourselves that way. To understand that we have been fashioned to be wonderful for a purpose takes

even more examination or reflection. In a world of rapid change, increasing complexity and uncertainty, we can feel anxious and concerned, even a bit adrift at times. Not examining too much can appear attractive. Just keeping up with what is happening now, let alone delving into the past or the future can be quite a challenge. Thus the allure of those who offer clear answers, simple directions, certainty in life. They can be very appealing. But: *My God, search out my feelings and thoughts and know my heart. Continue to understand my anxious thoughts and concerns. Make sure that I am on the right path, and guide me on the road to eternity.* Psalm 139 reminds us to trust in God rather than those who offer certainly, those who simply offer rules and a blueprint for life. It reminds us how important it is to live intentionally rather than just following the pack, going along with whatever happens rather than discerning what is expected of us, discovering what we might do, what we can do and what we should do. And where God is in my life.

In the words of the song, you cannot change what's over, only where you go. We can look back at our successes and our failures, at where we found joy and happiness, frustration and even anger, where we gave and where we took, where we discovered a talent or two and at what people said to us and about us. We can look to the past, to what we 'made before' to find its messages so that we can use that wisdom to decide our future selves.

We are pilgrims on a journey. We have not yet arrived. If we had, we would no longer be pilgrims. As pilgrims we are searching for something we have not yet fully discovered. We are seeking out a path by looking to the wisdom of the past steps in our journey, at the moments of grace and enlightenment and encouragement. We look back at those who journeyed with us and we look forward with an open mind and heart, conscious of our need for nourishment and the continued gift of God's presence and grace. In a very real sense, a pilgrimage is a journey of discovery which takes an adventurous heart and mind, and time to appreciate the gifts so freely given, and the grace to freely accept them.

Regards  
**Jim Quillinan**

Email: [jquillinan@dcsi.net.au](mailto:jquillinan@dcsi.net.au)