

August 2023

As you read this you may well be putting your feet up and having a well-earned rest from school, work or even church! Summer is a time for taking things a little easier and making space for rest and relaxation. But of course, many continue to work hard to make such recreation possible for us! We may want to take a moment to value all those who make our holidays possible. There's always room to say, 'thank you!'

You will be aware that I recently had the opportunity of taking a little time out for some sabbatical. Howard and I spent a month walking the Via Di Francesco, a pilgrimage walk, in the footsteps of St Francis, in Italy. We walked some 140 miles from Rome to Assisi, using local transport for the other 40 or 50 miles along the way. We took our time, not least because of the wear and tear on our hips and knees as we went up and down steep gradients. In addition, it gave us room to notice things along the way.

It is often the small, seemingly insignificant things which can get overlooked as we travel through life isn't it. How many of us make the time to 'stand and stare' as William Davies puts it in his poem, 'Leisure'? So, I found myself discovering new meaning in the unexpected moments of pause that the walk brought us. The brief conversation with Destiny, a refugee, whilst we waited at a bus stop, who generously shared his bus tickets with us. The awareness of the world of creation around us – birdsong; the quill of a porcupine on the path; a family of wild pigs running through wheat fields. The kindness and hospitality of strangers. Encountering God in new people and places.

During this month, when perhaps the business of your life is stilled a little, are you expecting to encounter God? Will he need to break in or interrupt you, or how might you intentionally make time for him? Where might you notice the glimpses of God in the world around and hear his voice speaking into your experience?

I hope that this summer you will experience not only the rest and recreational power of a good holiday but also the space to renew your relationship with God. Along with the writer to the Ephesians, I pray 'that you may have the power to comprehend, ...what is the breadth and length and height and depth,' of God's love for you.

With love and prayers

+Ruth