

Thoughts for the day: 4-10 October 2021

by Jenny Mutch

Monday 4 October

Thought for the Day - The infant

This week's Thoughts for the Day are based loosely on Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man. This is my take, based on my experiences as part of a journey in faith.

***'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.'* (Hebrews 11:1)**

When my daughter was born, the doctor said: "You are going to have fun with this one!" He was correct.

From a small child she was both determined and inquisitive, which was sometimes fun and sometimes not! I am sure this resonates with anyone who has interacted with pre-school children.



More recently, Forbes and I went to Paignton Zoo whilst on holiday. We engaged with a mother and child who were looking at some birds and talking about their feeding habits. Of course, I couldn't help adding some words about habitats! That was it – I became an expert!

"Have you seen the Eastern Bongo yet?" asked the little girl. "No," we replied. "Follow me, I will show you," said the girl. We did so without question. She had no doubt in her mind that we would be able to see this animal. And there it was, by the edge of a large enclosure. We felt both humbled and fortunate to see such a majestic, but sadly critically endangered, animal.

From the day children are born they are open to faith, belief and trust. We have a lot to learn from them.

Tuesday 5 October

Thought for the Day - The schoolchild

'Our Lord will instruct us and teach us in the way we should go; He will counsel us with his loving eye on us.'
(edited from Psalm 32:8)

I remember my first day at school. Until then, I had been protected by my parents. Things were different at school.

There were children who didn't turn their jigsaws upside down because it was more challenging that way; they ate food I had never been allowed; some had holes in their socks and jumpers and few went to Sunday school. I remember being fascinated by my new classmates and recognised the smallness of my world up until that point.



I made a friend on Day One. Together, we explored our new world, often rewarded with a trip to the Head Teacher's office or a wrap on the knuckles with a ruler (yes, it was that long ago) for talking and giggling in class. Sometimes we dressed the same to confuse our dinner ladies when one of us wanted an extra pudding, professing that it was the other one who had come up twice already!

We were exploring our new-found freedom and formulating our own thoughts. We didn't always get it right but we learned a lot about our society and the natural world. Of course, we weren't aware of the words of Psalm 32 v 8, but we can all remind ourselves that Our Lord is always there to support us through life's journey – how great is that?

PS - I still keep in touch with my friend – we don't look alike anymore and she has grown significantly taller than me – so we can no longer play the same tricks on people but we still giggle!!!

Wednesday 6 October

Thought for the Day - The Teenager

***'Let no man despise your youth, but be an example to those who believe, in word, in your way of life, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.'* (1 Timothy 4:12)**

By the time my daughter reached her teenage years, the doctor's words of wisdom about us having 'fun' as she grew up had certainly materialised.

We didn't always see eye to eye. Short (very short) skirts, thinking she could go to gigs in London on her own and stay over at friends at 14; weird and wacky hair styles and general angst were all part of her stage act!

I watched from the side lines as she waded through life's treacle of opportunities and temptations. On reflection, I don't think I was any better than she was, with a string of inappropriate boyfriends, wandering off on 20-mile walks, forgetting to let my parents know, or going to the beach on a friend's boat and coming home when I felt like it.

And yet, within all this bravado, both my daughter and I kept in touch with God: we were lucky since we knew, deep down, that God was never really far away. I would secretly open my Gideon bible when I didn't understand what was happening to my thoughts or changes in my body. It is hard being a teenager - often misunderstood or chastised - and yet it is an essential part of our growing spiritual life: I think teenagers are great (but don't tell them)!

Today's Bible quote reminds us that we should embrace our youth (teenagers) and welcome their alternative, albeit often challenging, views to explore our own journey in faith and spirituality. Look no further than Greta Thunberg's statement,

'Together and united, we are unstoppable'. Let us reflect on that inclusive thought for the good of us all.



Greta Thunberg on stage during Fridays For Future at Medborgarplatsen in Stockholm on 14 February 2020.

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Thursday 7 October

Thought For The Day - The Young Adult

'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.'
(Colossians 3:23-24)

Forbes and I have four young adults (our children) trying to find their way in life. They are very different, but they are all passionate about their ambitions. They are the lucky ones. They have worked out what works for them. And yet, their lives are not easy.



Being a young adult in our society brings immense pressure to conform and aspire to certain 'norms': a job with prospects, a house of your own, the latest social media-enhanced

phone for selfies to share latest excitement or a top-notch

wedding with a price tag to match (we know about this because our daughter Claire has recently announced her engagement).

And roles begin to reverse as they start to show the first signs of worrying about their parents! Our young adults now tell us off – take it easy, buy a good bike lock (very sound advice), get someone to help you!

For many young people, God often becomes backstage noise as immediate reward expectations take over. Perhaps we need to rethink our social branding and parenting values too - seek a job or a way of life that satisfies the soul; a home that is a sanctuary, a phone to share positive thinking and a wedding that focuses on peace and love. This, of course, applies to us all – it is too easy to serve our earthly masters for material gain, rather than focus on our bigger future inheritance and peace with Our Lord. Mental note to self!

Friday 8 October

Thought For The Day - Middle Age

***'Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up.'* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)**

If you believe Wikipedia, middle age is between 45-65 years old. I like this definition because, in our society at least, I am still middle aged for a little while longer.

Wikipedia also states that this phase of life is marked by gradual physical, cognitive and social change. It makes for stark reading: we slow down, are more likely to get ill and less likely to take up the physical challenges that we could in our youth.

We become more conscious of our mortality but, on a positive note, we move towards a more satisfying and tranquil place.

Personally, I am not sure about the tranquillity or the slowing down, having just completed my first (and maybe last) London Marathon. Whilst running, I had a few hours to ask myself what has changed since my youth, apart from creaky knees.



I quickly realised that, these days, I can't run 26.2 miles alone. Such youthful self-belief has gone. Instead, success has to be predicated on team working; those who provide sponsorship, encouragement, support and Forbes on his trusty two-wheeled steed as backup! On Sunday, I needed the strength and wisdom of people around me: I have learnt to better appreciate other people's strengths and to accept my weaknesses.

Maybe that is what is meant by tranquillity and satisfaction: an acceptance of ourselves, the ability to recognise God-given gifts in others and to celebrate that God did not make us all the same, so that we can gain strength from each other.

Saturday 9 October

Thought For The Day - Old Age

***'And I will still be carrying you when you are old. Your hair will turn grey and I will still carry you. I made you, and I will carry you to safety.'* (Isaiah 46:4)**

OK – so I haven't got there yet but, according to Shakespeare, at this time in our life our hearing and/or sight is not what it was, plus we have a few wrinkles, aches and pains. And yet this

is skin deep: how often do we hear the phrase, 'I still feel like I am 20 years old inside'.

A few weeks ago, we celebrated Forbes' parents' 69th wedding anniversary. It was a small gathering at the residential care home where they now reside. They were so pleased to see us all. To me, today's picture says it all: they have recognised the important things in life.



They have learnt about dignity and appreciation. They talk about their relationships, rather than possessions (well, apart from a 'lost' mobile phone and bottle of whisky). They talk about how lucky they have been. They think back on their lives, their love for their family, each other, their wider circle of friends, their experiences and their spiritual life. They are in a safe place on earth for their

physical needs but they also know God is keeping them safe spiritually.

Life is not easy, but knowing that we will be carried to safety surely has to be a comforting thought throughout our journey and yet, it so easily forgotten in the whirlwind of what is next!

Sunday 10 October

Thought For The Day - Death

***'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.'* (John 11:25-26)**

I feel I have to deviate from Shakespeare's chronology today, since we are all painfully aware that death occurs at any time - not just post-old age - and it is those who are left behind who usually feel the pain of loss.

When faced with a death, I suspect I am not alone in first asking WHY? Followed by a reflection of my own life: 'I must achieve a better work-life balance; what and who is important, life is too short.' For me, these thoughts are generally short-lived, before I go off again at a 100 miles-an-hour, trying to cram too much into the day (and sometimes the night).

How do I learn to act on my reflections? (Any suggestions gratefully received!) We will never understand why death can occur at all of life's stages, but accepting that we are all actors in a bigger picture has to be a good start in terms of acceptance: we all have our part to play in God's beautiful world and, as John reminds us, if we believe in God we will never die.

Death is part of the cycle of life and we should strive to celebrate it as such. Of course, it is not easy, and I suspect it was never meant to be so - otherwise how would we grow and know our God-given destiny?



Let us pray every day that God leads us in the life plan that He has for us, so we can leave this world with an inspiring and lasting legacy for future generations in His name. Amen