

St Nicholas Parish Church, Prestwick

The Thought for the Week

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2021

You see a lot of fat when the sun shines in Scotland. As soon as there is a hint of warmth and blue skies, copious amounts of flesh are on view on the beach and on the street, and often acres of body art which must have cost a small fortune.

Oversized people often stuffed into diminutive shorts and t-shirts. Rolls and lumps and batches of ectoplasm protruding over waistbands, sagging, flogging, bouncing, making themselves very obvious.

There is nothing like the sunshine in Scotland to reveal our sins of the flesh to others and to ourselves.

I tried on a t-shirt last week that I had bought a few years ago, and that skimpy bit of cloth seemed to exaggerate the extent of my corpulence.

It is a bit like the little Dutch boy trying to hold back the waters of the mighty ocean with a cramped little finger stuck in the dyke!

Its very inadequacy only emphasised the disproportionateness of sagging, uncooperative flesh!

On my ordination to the Ministry many moons ago, I was a mere stick insect, or as my dear Dad used to say, “Fraser, you are like a matchstick with the wood scraped off!” – how my love of good food and fine wines has piled on the pounds down through the years! Some folk eat to live....I seem to fall in to that category of those who live to eat! For me, there is something so comforting, so life enhancing, about sitting down to a meal with family and good friends. The whole ambience of the occasion – the relaxing atmosphere around the table, the chat, the food, all lift the spirits.

When I was a student, living and working in the south of France, I looked forward to Sundays, for then, after Church, I was frequently invited to someone’s home, and, as you know, the French lay great emphasis on the importance of entertaining. Around the table there would be grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, as well as the family themselves, and the lunch would last into the early evening. It was wonderful!

Every Friday evening I tutored English to three children in their home and Madame Eyserric, their mother, insisted that I stay for dinner – she did not have to insist too much! She was a great cook, every course a real treat, and it would be about 11 o’clock when I would bid them a fond goodnight and I would stroll the short distance home to my little flat, well fed and watered.

Of course, in my role as a parish minister, I received many invitations to luncheons, dinners, Burns Suppers, weddings, celebrations of all kinds, and the pounds piled on in spite of me trying so hard to be careful. And one of the biggest insults that I received in recent years was when someone said to me that I was getting more and more like Tam Cowan! That is an incentive to diet.

A few years ago, along with one of my Assistants at St Columba Church, after Christmas we decided to try Weightwatchers in Ayr. We enrolled in the class in the hall of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Fullarton Street, and were relieved that there were several other males joining us. We took our plan away and began to follow in rigorously – the first week, I had lost one pound. I was so chuffed that I was on the right road, but when I returned the following week, I discovered to my horror, that I had gained a couple of pounds even though I had been strict in my adherence to the plan. I suggested to the lady in charge that perhaps her scales were out, but she gave me a withering look. I never returned!

Jesus Himself was often accused of being a “glutton and a drunkard” because He so enjoyed those social occasions that He shared in the company of others. Remember that His first miracle was turning the water into wine at the wedding reception in Cana. Again and again in the Gospels, we find our Lord reclining at table.

Sharing a table is one of the most uniquely human things we do. No other creature consumes its food at a table. And sharing a table with others reminds us that there is more to food than sustenance.

And I have been convinced for many years now that food is one of God’s love languages. Just think about it – the average human has about 10,000 taste buds. Doesn’t that signal to us that God wants us to experience delight as we taste and eat? He could have made us that our consumption of food is merely fuel for bodies, but it is much more than that in His scheme of things.

So, though I try to be careful in what I consume, I am convinced that my metabolism is such that I only need to look at food, and my weight increases. I should perhaps give up chocolate and crisps for a while!

Anyhow, having said that, the writer of one of the Psalms was more concerned about fat on the soul – the undisciplined, out of control aspect of our inner existence, that places a strain on our spiritual heart, and he resolved to get rid of this invisible fat – to diet and exercise it away, to restore himself to spiritual trimness and fitness.

So, those are two things I need to do.

As I saw myself in the mirror this morning, I decided that I must try harder to lose my spare tyre! Perhaps I should walk the Prom twice a day instead of only once. I don’t have a glass of wine with dinner, except on a Sunday, but that does not seem to be having the desired effect yet. I have resolved to cut out my biscuit with my elevenses – and that is a real hardship. Someone suggested that I have a gastric band fitted – the blooming cheek!

But I will work on it, so watch this space.

I know that spiritual fatness is not as obvious as physical fatness, at least not to others in this age of spiritual obesity.

But I know that it is there, and I shall not be content until it is gone and I feel myself as taut and trim in my inner life as some of those beautiful people who frequent Bannatyne’s and who jog and cycle on the Prom in their lycra and who don’t have an ounce of spare flesh on them!

Then I will feel good all over and all under too! *The Revd Fraser R Aitken, Locum Minister.*

