

So I've succumbed. I'm now wearing one of those wrist bands that monitors your every motion. Well, not every motion; but certainly how many paces I do in a day. When I get to Mirfield, where Peter is training, and the risk of the Mirfield stone looms – that's the one folk put on around their midriff – those 10,000 paces a day will become a necessity. It has changed my life already. I came back from a concert late the other evening and I'd only done 7,630, so off I went, for two circuits of the great churchyard in the dark, by the light of a beautiful full moon.

And yes, it was beautiful; leaving me full of the sounds and sense of the night, with that verse from psalm 8 rolling around in my mind:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have ordained,
What are mortals, that you should be mindful of them;
mere human beings, that you should seek them out?

The rhythm of the words fell with my footsteps, as I followed a variety of paths – tarmac, around the green; ancient coffin path up to the north door of St Mary's; footpath, covered with cones and pine needles, through the gravestones. Paths that have become oh-so-familiar over the last seven years.

We walk for any number of reasons. Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, wrote this:

Above all, do not lose your desire to walk. Every day I walk myself into a state of well-being and walk away every illness. I have walked myself into my best thoughts and I know of no

thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it. If one just keeps on walking, everything will be all right.

When we walk, our bodies are doing a great deal, unawares. Nerves, muscles all responsive to the external stimuli that come through eyes, ears, touch, to enable us to put one foot in front of another. We look one moment at the ground before our feet, taking in the detail of stone and plant, surface and safety. The next moment, our eyes are lifted to the hills, to the far horizon, imagining what lies beyond what we can see; what will happen when we go around the bend.

And of course, a walk is just a walk. Or is it?

A bit like life. As time goes by, we can go through our lives, choosing, or not, to give meaning and significance to what happens to us. Many have decided this – a walk is just a walk; a life is just a life. Early on, in my late teens, it occurred to me that this is the most significant question we face.

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

So now, when I look to the horizon, I know there is a beyond to which I travel. When I look at the ground upon which I walk, I marvel at the God-given beauty of stone and puddle, and give thanks.

Sometimes, in our lives, we create a path where before there wasn't one. Sometimes, more often, we find ourselves on an ancient path, where generations have trod, have trod, have trod before us.

Perhaps you've read Robert MacFarlane's book *The Old Ways*. His exploration of the ancient paths over land and sea. A fascinating account of how humans interact with their natural environment, marking, and being shaped, by the land. For once a path is there, we will naturally follow it, pleased to be spared the trouble of treading down nettles and docks, avoiding boulders, trees and brambles. Glad that we don't need to concentrate completely on where our next footstep will be, but able to look up, and enjoy the scenery, or study the weather. This is the way. Walk in it. We have others before us to thank, as we contribute to the making of a path, its history.

So using a path is a communal, trans-generational activity. It's a powerful metaphor for life, isn't it? That our individual journeys from birth to death are shaped by others; that we follow in their footsteps; and we, in turn, make paths for those who follow. Yes, occasionally we will branch out, must branch out, to cross unmarked territory; but on the whole we tread well-worn paths, in the company of others.

Over the last seven years I have been privileged to walk with you. With the people of Suffolk; of this beautiful town; with members of this Cathedral community; with colleagues, Matthew and Philip; with the Chapter, with the Bishop. We have been on a path together. It's now time for me to branch off, to leave this way and find another, now sharing with Peter his call to priesthood. I leave with enormous gratitude for the things we have shared; for what I have learned; for the joys and sorrows of the road.

It's no accident that Jesus Christ said of himself that he is the way, the truth and the life. He was encouraging his followers to take the

way, to explore the truth, to live life in abundance. He showed, shockingly, a path that leads to life by way of a cross. Now, if we choose, our lives can be shaped by the promise he made, that death is not the final word. That nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. If we choose, then our life is more than just a life. Our walk is more than just a walk. It becomes a pilgrimage.

We find ourselves trusting the way we are on. Yes, because people greater than us have travelled it before; but also because we see with our own eyes that it is a good God-given road, giving grace, enabling us to be full of faith, hope and love. We join others and find our fuller humanity in learning to live with, and trust, other people. All sorts of others we rub along with, like those described by Chaucer, on their way, so long ago, to Canterbury. Fellow pilgrims to learn from, as together we travel the way, seek the truth, and live the life.

The prophet Isaiah, who walked the way of God many thousands of years ago, wrote this:

And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left,
your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the
way; walk in it.'

We can struggle to find our way through life at times, to live fruitfully and meaningfully. It's then that these wise words need to guide our feet, to give us a moral compass. Whether we are alone, walking in the night time of our fear; whether we are a family, or a Cathedral Chapter, individual or company, we need to search out the path that God wants us to follow. Scripture can help; the words of liturgy guide us. The voice of conscience as we pray; the guidance of friends.

It was the story of that famous walk that three disciples made, full of grief and pain, after they had witnessed the tearing, searing agony of their friend dying on a cross, that convinced me that there is no deeper knowledge than this. For as they walked, they found themselves accompanied by a stranger, the only stranger in Jerusalem who seemed not to know what had happened. They drew near to Emmaus, the village to which they were going, and this man walked ahead as if he were going on. But they had so enjoyed his company, drawn comfort from his words, that they urged him to stay.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'

To walk the Christian way is to share company – literally, *com-panis* – to break and share bread together. I have been honoured to share bread at this altar with you over the last seven years, to enjoy your company. As we look to the future, I pray that all of us will continue to seek the right, good, old way to follow. Thank you to so many friends and colleagues around the county, and here; for the privilege of serving God in this beautiful, holy place and land. And I say also, publicly, thank you to Peter and the family; Peter especially, for his love and support, as I join him on the next stage of our pilgrimage in life together.

I pray that our hearts may continue to burn within us, as we walk our different paths through life. I know, that even though our roads diverge, that we are all ultimately on the way of our lives, from birth to death, full of meaning and significance. Accompanied by the Holy Spirit, we follow the way, the truth and the life, Jesus Christ. Christ who guides us from God, to God.

As we walk through life, we are sustained by the bread which is blessed and broken. We walk together towards the feast that awaits us, the heavenly banquet where, as Isaiah says, the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, like the light of seven days, where we will know, and be known, in the breaking of the bread. We walk in the light of Christ.

Give me my scallop shell of quiet, My staff of faith to walk upon,
My scrip of joy, immortal diet, My bottle of salvation,
My gown of glory, hope's true gage, And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.