

Along the track

To Those Who Keep Us Moving

From our earliest times, we have been people on a journey, travellers. Moses led the people out of Egypt, and they roamed the desert for years. Way back around 600 BC, the prophet Jeremiah said: This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). As far back as the tenth century, pilgrims in increasing numbers have walked the Camino, following those ancient paths. Marco Polo and Christopher Columbus roamed the earth on sea and land in search of new discoveries, and so the list goes on.

Today we roam, we travel in numbers never seen before, by land, sea and air. We travel for all sorts of reasons, short trips and long journeys and sometimes it seems we are never still. But then something happens.

Some time ago our trains stopped running for weeks. So it was back to buses, cars, to side roads and the freeways, back to traffic jams, trams, taxis, bikes. Or even walking. We who come from this ancient tradition of travelling were angry, frustrated, looking for someone to blame.

It is easy to forget about those who keep us moving. We take them for granted until we can't go where we want, when we want. We take their skills for granted, the clever technology, the intricate pattern of rails that need maintaining, the roads always widening, always guiding more and more traffic to more and more places. We take for granted those who designed all this. We forget the long hours that so many spend working in the sun, at night, in the cold and rain so that we can get to where we want, when we want. We forget about the abuse from the impatient traveller, the road rage these workers are subjected to at times. We take the train drivers, the tram drivers, the bus drivers for granted, those who have to endure the bad language and behaviour and sometimes the violence.

So here's to those who keep us going, for work, for pleasure, in times of emergency, when we feel adventurous, when we want to travel to loved ones, when we visit the sick, the lonely, the grandkids and parents. Here's to those who enable us to get to school, to ... well, anywhere really. Here's to the train drivers, the technicians, the ticket collectors, the

planners, the roadies, the taxi drivers, the bus and tram drivers, those who come in times of emergency, in short, those who keep the wheels rolling.

Sr Joan Chittister offers this story:

One day, a traveller begged the Teacher for a word of wisdom that would guide the rest of the journey. The Teacher nodded affably and, though it was the day of silence, took a sheet of paper and wrote on it a single word, "Awareness."

"Awareness?" the traveller said, perplexed. "That's far too brief. Couldn't you expand on that a bit?" So the Teacher took the paper back and wrote, "Awareness, awareness, awareness."

"But what do these words mean?" the traveller insisted.

Finally, the Teacher reached for the paper and wrote, clearly and firmly, "Awareness, awareness, awareness means... Awareness!"

Sometimes we travel from place to place, just focussed on getting there. If we are passengers, we can sit there glued to mobile phones or other devices. Nothing wrong with that but we can be unaware, insensitive perhaps to the journey we are taking, what lies around us as we go and how we are getting there. I read somewhere once that we travel to faraway places to watch, in fascination, the kind of people we ignore at home. I remember when so much work was done getting rid of rail crossings and how quickly we just got used to the overpasses, we hardly give them a second glance or think of the planning and labour that went into them.

So the word of wisdom for the traveller is awareness, not just our surroundings but once in a while, spare a thought for those who enable us to get to our destination, be that a short trip or a long journey. Spare a thought for those who suffer the traumas of road crashes and for those who come to their aid. Spare a thought for those who enrich our lives because we are able to travel and those who keep us safe along the way.

Regards
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