

[by Jan Grey 01730 825411]

The Lord's Prayer must be said hundreds of millions of times a day by Christians all over the world. Sometimes it becomes 'routine' for me, the individual phrases run into one another seamlessly, almost without reflection.

My French O' Level French results, taken so many decades ago, were undistinguished and my linguistic skills haven't progressed much since, but when visiting French-speaking Switzerland I manage to follow the Mass there with my fragments of the language, and the familiarity. On the altar steps in one village church are two quite large boards on which the Our Father and Hail Mary are printed, in French of course. My translation of the first phrase is 'Our Father, who art in the sky'. At first this just made me smile but over time I have been very pleased for that simple change of imagery leading me to take much more notice of the sky above.

Unimpeded by skyscrapers, we are blessed with plenty of sky in this area. From the dark of a moonless night, to the almost white of a powerful summer sun, the palette of reds, oranges and pinks of sunrises and sets, through the blues and greens of clear skies to the variety of the whites and greys of clouds, the colours are of endless variety and depth, and the continually changing patterns various beyond imagination. Despite some light pollution we can see the delicate face of the moon, and we know that there are billions of stars beyond our sight.

The infinite sky surrounds the earth, embraces the earth, engages with everything that we live with, and with us. When the priest says, "which earth has given, and human hands have made", the wheat and the vine would not be available were it not for the sun and the rain, the latter a continual exchange between the earth and the sky.

So, the French imagery has encouraged me to be aware of our Father with greater wonder; with dynamism, colour, engagement and presence, and for this I am very grateful.

Jan Grey

St Laurence's Catholic Church