Dear friends,

*Are we there yet...?*

Anyone who has travelled with children, or who has been a child (I think that covers most of us) will have heard, or will have asked, the above question- it usually happens about two minutes into the journey, and at frequent intervals thereafter. I suppose that our relationship with time changes as we grow up, or, in my case, fail to grow up; the experience of time seeming to pass more swiftly with age is certainly a commonplace one, unless one is at a PCC meeting, when it slows to a glacial crawl *. Really, Stephen Hawking would have done well to examine this phenomenon- A Brief History of Time and PCC Meetings, might have been a second bestseller for him.

I suppose the child’s question is something to do with impatiently wanting to be at the destination, but it may also point to a mild instance of disorientation. The journey is, let us suppose, an unfamiliar one, and the child doesn’t have the experience or capacity to calculate how far away Blackpool or Devon might be, so he or she wants to *know* how long they will be in the car. Of course, there are going to be a number of variables on the journey- traffic jams, car breakdown, nervous breakdown, length of queues for the overpriced cafeteria / appalling lavatories at motor services, the Satnav taking us to Lewisham instead of Lowestoft, etc, etc. – but in our response to the child, we don’t include those imponderables, but say something reassuring, such as: “It won’t be long. Have another sweetie/ read your comic / play another horribly gruesome game on your Smartphone / laptop...” You will be familiar with other ways that time can be filled on these journeys, *I spy*, and so on- I recall travelling with one very nice family who had invented a game they called ‘Roadkill, but probably the less said about that the better. All of us will have found ways of filling the time- indeed many are still working, or doing other very fruitful things, or, importantly, discovering the joy of stillness, of simply *being*.

Nonetheless, I guess some of us in these past weeks have wanted to ask the child’s question, “Are we there yet?” Indeed, that question is being asked, as it were, on our behalf by the media, politicians and others, of those who might be thought to be able to offer authoritative answers. Of course, the response that
comes back is at its core inevitably nebulous. We just do not know. Those who are supposed to be able to formulate satisfactory answers to that question cannot do so with the precision of our GPS telling us what our time of arrival will be. They will attempt to reassure us, but the essence of the reply is akin to the one that I recall used to irk me as child, “We will be there when we will be there.” And that, I think, is it in a nutshell!

However, there is another and deeper way of looking at our situation. What I want to say to you, my friends, is this: as Christians, we are always there. Although we speak of life as a journey, or pilgrimage, we are, as somebody said, up to our necks in God, who is both journey and destination (The one in whom we live and move and have our being) If we are with God, we are always there, because, to quote once again a saint of the Church, “God is not elsewhere.” So, let us be reassured by the presence of the One who knows all things, whose children we are, and who is with us now and always.

With blessing and prayers
Fr Keith
Vicar

* I am joking, of course.