**Ministerial Meandering**

*Joy*

In ten-and-a-half minutes (allegedly), on a ski lift in Aspen, Colorado, back in 1973, John Denver wrote Annie’s Song for his wife. It starts with the words, ‘You fill up my senses...’ I am sure most of you know it and could probably sing it right now.

It is a love song, but the utilisation of all our senses is something that we all tend to do unconsciously when we experience joy. I am sure that many of you will fondly recall the moments of exquisite joy when you were first in love, and the things that you remembered about those moments; not just the touching, but the sight, the sound, the smell - indeed, the *aura* of your beloved. That is why, when we lose those things, we feel the pain of loss so *viscerally* - to use CS Lewis’ term. But just as we can recall the pain of loss, so too can we recall the joy of love.

I felt that this last Sunday, performing a Re-affirmation of Marriage Vows for David and Valerie, they gave *me* a gift of their joy. I could see it in the tiny things that were shared between them - I suspect unconsciously - as they said their vows again. There was the encouraging squeeze that David gave Valerie’s hands when they joined them, there was the moistness in Valerie’s eyes and slight hesitancy in her voice as she spoke - but you couldn’t take the smile off her face.

Later, when they joined with family and friends after the service, there was the relaxed intimacy that comes with trust, familiarity, and the simple enjoyment of each other’s company, as they shared time with their extended family. I went home with Sheila with a profound sense of joy for both of them, which, thinking about the day much later in the evening as we were walking our dogs, could only bring a smile back to my lips as I told Sheila for the umpteenth time how happy the morning service had been.

But there was yet more joy at the service even so; I told of Sylvia’s ‘double rescue’ - both of abused dog (now aptly re-named ‘Hero’), and traumatized ‘hooman’, Sylvia herself, grieving over the sudden recent loss of her erstwhile dog, Jake - to whom she had promised she would rescue another dog needing a home; from cage to comfort, from lashing to love, Hero came - all within seven days of Sylvia ‘Crying in the Chapel’.

What can I tell you, my very special people? Only that the joy you impart is enough at times to take my breath away. The gifts you bring of sorrows and joy are - in Jesus’ words - a light burden for me to carry, because I share it with Him. There are times, it is true, when I feel as though I am carrying the whole weight on my own shoulders - but then it’s time to take a wake-up, and remind myself that *that* is when He ‘lifts me up…to more than I can be.’

Remind yourself now - with joy - that He does the same for you, too.

Philip+