

9th September 2021

FANS

**“O lang, lang may the ladies sit
Wi’ their fans into their hand,
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens,
Come sailing to the strand.”**

Traditional Ballad, Sir Patrick Spens

Some years ago, I spent three months with the Church of the Saviour in Washington DC. Space doesn't permit a lengthy explanation of what that time meant to me, but suffice to say, there were many different opportunities for worship and fellowship with individuals and groups during my time there. As a visitor, I was invariably invited to introduce myself – name, study-leave, three months, from Scotland, and the like – and I was always warmly welcomed, usually with a round of applause.

After a few weeks, I was attending a gathering in a new venue, and had to introduce myself again. As I looked around, I was conscious that I knew pretty well everyone there. So I said so, and added, “I'm sure you'll be bored hearing the same things again, because you've heard me speak so often before.” To which the lady who was introducing me replied – in a strong, Southern-States drawl – “Aw, gee Tom. But we could listen to you again and again. After all, we just *love* hearing your Scottish accent.” There was *loud* applause, accompanied by whoops and whistles. Clearly, I was among adoring fans, and I loved it! My self-esteem went through the roof!

I share this story, not out of any sense of personal arrogance. (It was clearly being Scottish that *really* mattered!) But it still felt like an affirmation for me. The people in the Church of the Saviour didn't wait for *their* Sir Patrick Spens with “fans into their hand”. But, in welcoming a stranger into their midst, they showed themselves to be the fans that a visitor from across the pond, and far from home, really needed.

What affirmation, gratitude and welcome can you express to someone today? Why don't you tell someone that what they've done, why they matter, or what they offer makes you a fan of theirs. You may not do it with applause, whoops or whistles, but you can be sure you'll leave them with a boost to their self-esteem they will never forget.

A prayer for today

Lord, if I have any fans, I thank them for their affirmation.

Help me to be a fan of those who need that affirmation too. Amen