

Thought for the day – Tuesday 27th February 2024

By Revd Kit Gunasekera

Tom Shackle

I wrote about Pat Fillery last week, a former volunteer at the coffee shop I worked at. I forgot to say that the reason I wrote about her, is that Lent is a time when many people volunteer, giving up their time doing something else to serve the needs of the local community. I am so grateful to all those who volunteer their time at St James, without them, we really would not function very much at all.

Another coffee shop volunteer who comes to mind is Tom Shackle. There would be times when we were very busy and it was just the great Millie and me (I will write about her next week) and in between serving customers in an increasingly lengthening Que, I would gaze at tables full of crockery and wonder how we were going to get some sort of order. Would I have to close the shop for 10 mns, which I really did not want to do? At which point, Tom would often march in. Tom by then was in his eighties, and he would point his finger at me and say "One Hour?", which meant, did I want his help for one hour. I would say yes please, and he would take off his jacket, hurl it at the steps by the kitchen where Pat would stand and have her break, put on his apron, march out with a trolley, sweep the dirty crockery off the tables, march the trolley back into the kitchen (Millie would often have to step out of the way of the incoming rocket just in time) fling open the dishwasher, practically throw the clean dishes into their place, load the dishwasher with a great clatter, slam the door shut, press the button, and repeat the cycle!

The noise level in the kitchen went up several decibels when Tom was around and my friends from the book shop would come in and joke "I can hear that Tom is around!" We lost a cup or a saucer most times Tom helped, but that was no problem at all! Within a few moments, there were clean and empty tables, order had been restored, and my mental health and improved considerably! And he did all that with a friendly smile and a slightly wild look in his eye. The customers, recognizing a unique and great force had been unleashed for their benefit would watch him with fond interest and awe!

Thank God for friends who turn up unexpectedly, and give us help in our hour of need. If we were to count them, over the years, I suspect there would be quite a few of them. May we be those friends to others in need too.

BIBLE VERSES:

"And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

- Hebrews 13:16