

July 2019

*In April, I open my bill
In May, I sing night and day
In June, I change my tune
In July, how far I fly
In August, away
Cuckoo!*

So writes the early nineteenth children's poet. Jane Taylor, best known for her nursery song, "*Twinkle, twinkle, little star,*" and there's a sense that by the time we reach July, the year, like the cuckoo, if we've been fortunate enough to hear one lately, is very much flying away from us.

Marking the passage of time has always been a feature of the Christian calendar, indicating as it does the change of seasons with its feasts and fasts, its holy days and commemorations of the saints. July is one of the quieter months of the year as far as the Church's liturgy is concerned; the celebrations of Easter are now very much in the past, the long "green" weeks of the Sundays after Trinity stretch ahead far into the autumn.

In a culture which seems to thrive on excitement, novelty and the 'shock of the new,' that might be thought to be a problem. Steady long term growth, solid continuity and the hard learned lessons of experience are not valued enough in our increasingly strident and polarised society, where it seems more and more that 'the worst are filled with passionate intensity,' and the essential values of the Gospels are so often drowned out by the discordant noise of ignorant armies clashing by night - yet these are the quiet ways in which we make progress in most aspects of human life, the spiritual life included.

So, perhaps we could say that in July we take a break for a while from the highs of celebration to concentrate on the more mundane, unexciting facets of discipleship. As another poet, T.S. Eliot says in *Four Quartets*: "*and the rest is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.*" We can take heart from that.

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