

Another Day

Biblical reflections for busy teachers



Synergy in Classroom and School

"These are ... among my fellow-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me." Colossians 4:11

Paddy and Bartley were two horses behind whom my father would plough the fields. Paddy was an old and disciplined animal but Bartley was young and independent. When my father was ploughing, Bartley sometimes wanted to pull the plough in a different direction from Paddy. When this happened, my father had to work very hard to get them to work together and to pull in the same direction. At other times, Paddy and Bartley worked happily together and progress with the ploughing was then so much easier.

Synergy is a combined effect which is greater than the sum of individual effects. Two horses working together can pull rather more than twice what one horse can pull alone. My father sometimes enjoyed the effect of synergy between his horses but all too often it was lacking and he would come home exhausted by his efforts to promote it.

The Greek word 'sunergeo' is used several times in the New Testament, among them the verse from Colossians above and others that talk about 'fellow-workers' and 'working together'. Some of them even say that we can be co-workers with God Himself, we can work synergistically with Him and He with us! What grace on His part!

As teachers, we easily come to see ourselves as queens and kings in our own classrooms. We do not like to have other teachers observing us. We may have problems but we tend to pretend to others that everything is all right in our classroom.

A partner relationship with another teacher can be very helpful to both. We can commit ourselves to share the highs and the lows, to observe one another's lessons and expose our own practice to the scrutiny of the other, to work together to find new and better ways of doing things. We are not really self-sufficient, we need one another. Why pretend to be perfect?! Why not be vulnerable? What have we to lose except our pride?!

O God of all might and energy, as workers together with you and you with us, we ask that you will help us to admit our need of others and to work better together with them and that we will help those we teach to discover more synergy in working together too. Amen.