

Thoughts for Dawn on Easter Day 2018

Well congratulations on having made it to dawn today – it would be inappropriate for me to ask whether it's the offer of Breakfast or the desire to meet the Risen One that got you here so early.

Civil Twilight is only just beginning, and Sunrise will not be until 20 to 7 and by one of those quirks of astronomy, dawn today in Jerusalem is only some 10 minutes earlier than here in local time, so the women who set off to the tomb were early indeed – but how early ? – our reading says the sun had risen, so it perhaps wasn't quite *this* early.

Our Sunday would be a 'fairly normal' day in Israel – something I recall from a visit there some years ago, where even in Haifa, a reputedly liberal town, things went quiet on Friday evening as Shabbat, the Sabbath, had begun, lasting until sunset on the Saturday, but then Sunday was a 'regular day'.

So was it quiet as they made their way, or were things already beginning to stir? Were some of the crowds who we imagine were there for the Festival, going out to get provisions for the day – remember no refrigeration or frozen food then. Would the early shoppers (were they women?) have been good cover or did they present a risk of discovery?

You may have wrapped up warm this morning, and as the first light of dawn shows in the sky, we remember that Jerusalem is high, can be cold (I'm told snow is not unknown, and remember Peter warming himself by the charcoal fire on Thursday Evening) so our women may have shivered – was it just the cold, or was some of it nerves, the risk of discovery? Did intuition tell them that the world had changed? Were they nervously anticipating moving – or trying to move- a big stone? They got a surprise when they found it already moved, and the object of their mission gone – such a surprise that, we're told they fled and told no one? NO ONE ?– how then did the news spread?

It's worth remembering that the first witnesses to the Resurrection, however we understand that event, were women, when all the men had turned and left, and it is still to women that we look for hope, for redemption, for resurrection, in world still troubled by patriarchal hanging on to power – one thinks of young women such as Malala Yousafzai, so recently 'back home' in Pakistan – and her words – “One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world.” ... and remembers those whose only response to this was to try and murder her. The recent reaction to her reminds us still of the divisive nature of these matters for some societies.

And it's not just in religious matters that we face decisions, choices – today, by a quirk of the Calendar, the RAF celebrates its Centenary, and raises all those troubling questions around arms and the use of force which still are with us today.

And it's not just that amorphous 'them' – the others, different from us, the 'foreigners'(some of whom have lived here longer than we have) who can be scapegoated, imagined to be in some way responsible for the questions and problems we and the world faces. There has been too much too close to home recently for any of us to feel complacent, 'Holier than thou'. We, as Teresa of Avila would point out, are God's agents on earth to do his work,

So when we leave today, to go out into the world to live our lives, may we be prepared to see the Risen One in the faces of those we meet, though, like the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus, we may not at once recognise Him in them - until they break bread with us.