

TRINITY 7

You will know by now, that when I am not entirely sure what to preach on, I instinctively turn to poetry. And on this Regatta Day, today is no exception!! My choice is one of the nation's favourites by W.B. Yeats, 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'...

.....

I am sharing with you my thoughts, my reflection on today's Genesis reading about Jacob's ladder, which like the poem, is about a colourful dream, a treasured recollection, a memory that is actually transformative.

As someone who seems to dream a lot, and even more when the nights are hot, I so often wake up with a whole list of tasks or ideas, some of them muddled up together, others crystal clear, some seemingly urgent and others not. I hope and do not intend to suggest that these are signs of stress, but rather, in recent experience, signs of imagination, creativity, and even confidence.

Jacob is on his way to Haran and after the sun sets, he wants to lie down and sleep and, significantly, he chooses a stone as his pillow. He begins to dream of the ladder which touches heaven and earth and angels ascending and descending, and the Lord communicates with him directly, 'I am the Lord...' a startling enough moment to wake anyone from sleep, but no, the narrative continues about the ways in which the kingdom of God will spread by Jacob and his offspring to every corner of the world before God's promise of his safe return. He will not be left comfortless. He will not be deserted. God will

always be by his side. And then after the shock of hearing this, and that feeling of disorientation waking from sleep can bring us all, we hear those wonderful words of reassurance:

“This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.” The stone on which he slept has become a foundation stone, a pillar and a place on holy ground (Bethel), which he anoints and blesses with oil. This is a sacramental moment if you will which the Church of today still inherits and celebrates whenever, and wherever, new Churches are built and opened. There are so many favourite churches or cathedrals you have visited or lych-gates inscribed with these words from Genesis. The poet, Philip Larkin, famously described this same experience or sentiment: “A serious house on serious earth it is”.

The dream then is about building something beautiful and special, sacred I would say, and that place will for ever abide “on the roadway, or on the pavements grey, I hear it in the deep heart’s core.”

And that sense of the holy, of sacred space, is actually a metaphor for our life of prayer. We communicate, speak, and connect with the Lord of heaven and earth: to build us up in faith and to always rely upon Him - trust Him, as our rock and foundation. And yes, something I believe profoundly, with the prophet Joel (later repeated by the Apostle Peter in Acts of the Apostles):

“Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.” Amen.