

## TRINITY 7

Today is a great day to be Spanish, is it not, especially if you like tennis, as well as football? Later tonight after our special Evensong for Sea Sunday, many of us will be hoping that 'Football's coming home' to England. If it doesn't, we can expect the usual. There will be calls for the Manager's head on that proverbial platter – with a knighthood thrown in!

Well, we shall just have to wait and see after we have sent up all our prayers to Mary, our Mother of the Sea. I draw your attention to the hymn also, for tonight, 'Ave Maris Stella' and the words you can find as Hymn 180 in the English Hymnal. Wouldn't it be marvellous if we hear that being sung in Berlin tonight, instead of 'Sweet Caroline'? Dream on, Rector!

You may not be surprised to hear that I am not overly keen to focus much on today's Gospel because it speaks of vengeance on the part of Herodias and despite all the colour and 'draw' of that first liturgical dance, it is a tale of maternal revenge and murder. And yet, despite all the gory detail, the first few verses show us Herod reflecting on his misdemeanours, on his part in that crime, and his deep regret. That's my 'take' on the matter of fact words and solemn response, when he said: 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.'

Regret is an emotion in all of us that never goes away. It is not at all the same as 'saying sorry' or asking for forgiveness. It is something that haunts our professional lives and, private lives, that recollection of a time, an event, a decision which we now think foolish, mistaken or plain wrong. The best

autobiographies include and describe these times of regret or failure because they are a real and deep part of our being human, being vulnerable, and being flawed.

St Mark doesn't tell us how Herod either changed or grew from that awakening of resurrection life the prophets foretold. Perhaps I am wrong and Herod stubbornly refused to be moved by the claims and powers at work in the Risen Christ. Perhaps, if he overthought everything (as some people do), his regrets led him to become cynical, as well as fearful. Or depressed, melancholy perhaps?

We will never know - any more than we can fully know the Gospel writer's intention. But for me, it is a lasting narrative about the life of living the resurrection as well as the sea of faith, and that our call to saintliness is all about purpose, integrity, faithfulness, and not deceit. It is all about accepting and loving the prophets in our midst, and smiling more!

John the Baptist, St Peter, or Mother Teresa, were not something out of a beautiful, unblemished stained glass window. They had plenty of regrets like you and me. But they also had a resolve to become firm disciples to both love and serve the One whom we love and serve today: the Living Christ who is, our Alpha and Omega, marked out and sealed (don't forget), from the sacramental moment & day of our Baptism.

Water is never very far away from our life in the Spirit, our being tentative Christian followers and sailors, warts and all. And with the added bonus of living in a town astride the

River Deben, we do well to reflect and give thanks every day for our shared Christian calling and pilgrimage most of all. We do well to reflect and give thanks that we can overcome our regrets, change course, move forward, and sing a new song!

In the words of poet, Emily Dickinson (she/her):

“Exultation is in the going  
Of an inland soul to sea,  
Past the houses – past the headlands-  
Into deep Eternity –

Bred as we, among the mountains,  
Can the sailor understand  
The divine intoxication  
Of the first league out from land?”

Amen.