

Yorkshire Day has come and gone. August 1<sup>st</sup> has become a new special day and I can remember where I was and what was said when I first became aware of it. The occasion was in Bradford Cathedral when I was being a 'caretaker' Dean there. The front rows were full of chains - those of the mayors from across the county. I do not remember much more than that about the service, but I do remember the reception after. The speaker at the very grand lunch was Ingrid Roscoe, then Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire. A delightful lady who lived at Nun Monkton and who died only a few weeks ago. She began by musing on what the motto for a united Yorkshire would be. After cantering around unlikely possibilities, and to avoid political rivalry, she settled on the saying she heard in shops and markets across the county: that great Yorkshire question, 'How Much???'

Remembering where we were when something special or memorable happens is something common to all of us. Perhaps the most common for my generation might well be, 'Can you remember where you were when John Kennedy was shot?' More likely now for most, 'Can you remember where you were when the plane flew into the Twin Towers in New York?'

Today we have a new piece of remembering from our gospel. Jesus and Peter walked on the water, did they? It is the most implausible of stories to the modern ear but one included by each gospel writer so we cannot ignore it. Matthew, Mark, and Luke just after the feeding of the Five thousand and in a different place, but the same story in St John.

Why is it there and what is it for? First of all, it is there because the disciples remembered where they were when this event happened. Bible commentators agree that it was a significant turning-point in faith for the disciples. They also in the main, leave the story as it is without trying to demythologise it or explain it away. Instead they do what all good bible teachers and guides do - they say, 'if that is what it meant to them then, what does this mean for us today'.

St John's slightly different placing of the story is followed by the sayings about the many ways we can understand Jesus and the first is 'I am the bread of life'. There can, of course, be allegorical interpretations of this unusual happening and there has always been and still is, its main point - the need to have an inner self-confidence to live according to the faith that we have.

So, the story of the disciples in the boat is not just a 'wonder story' to be put in the 'too difficult box'. It has many elements but the main one is that speaks across the centuries is that faith brings a confidence to act in certain ways, and that others can see we have a faith and values which drive us. It is what St Paul in today's Epistle calls 'Righteousness'.

At the moment I am going through a series of books and theories about an individual life and the values which can be seen to have driven it. Such a study is called 'Biography as Theology'. One of the interesting examples is Dag Hammarskjöld. We know that he was a person of great integrity and drive. As Secretary General of the United Nations he worked to bring reconciliation in many places before he was killed in a plane crash. We only know about the workings of his inner life, what made him righteous, because his notes made through a lifetime were by his bedside and were found by a Swedish diplomat when he went to collect Hammarskjöld's belongings. He will never forget where he was when he made this great discovery. These papers held together in a clipboard were published as the spiritual classic, 'Markings'. They show the source of his inner confidence and have brought calm and peace to generations of readers.

We cannot put the point story of Jesus walking on the water aside. We cannot do this for a number of reasons:

It was very important for the realisation by the disciples of who Jesus was.

It was essential to the preaching of the early church where confidence and bravery were needed to follow Jesus.

It was formed a key ingredient in the teaching of St Paul because such trust needed to be seen in the life of all followers.

It is necessary when we look back over any well documented life to see what the driving values were.

It is important for each of us as we look back to the times and places when faith has been revealed in any special way.

Many around the world still pay a high price for courage in faith. Every enquirer is right to ask Lord Lieutenant Ingrid's Yorkshire question about the cost of belief, 'How much???'