

Easter Sunday – unseasonal bombing; sermon v. crying child

A perfect Easter Sunday; blue skies, as I write it is about 24°C and I suspect everyone is taking time off from even thinking about politics never mind Brexit – this long drawnout farce that makes me embarrassed to be British.

Today is Easter day (a variable date decided in the 7th century by an enclave of the good and the great in the church) when we celebrate the rising of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is also the day that the Tamil Tigers chose to gently remind us that 10 years ago they were considered to be defeated by the powers that be in Sri Lanka. I think it is eights bombs they let off (suicide bombers?) , four in churches and about the same number in five-star hotels. This is one of these events where the reported death toll will rise and rise. As I write it is reported as 200 (13:34 GMT) and that's dead people not injured.

And so to church. Easter Day is the high point in the church's calendar apart from Christmas Day. Both festivals are over commercialised, but much less so than the latter. We had a good turnout of about 50 people and an unfamiliar clerical face. It turns out that he was the incumbent of the Parish of Paulton until about 2001 so this was a nostalgic return visit for him or should I say a joyful visit with a touch of nostalgia.

I sat in the back as I normally do. Rather quickly, I noticed that there was a couple with a small child in arms. The last thing I want is to be disturbed by children crying. I therefore left my place and went over to the other side of the church. The Sung Eucharist followed its usual course. The co-

officiant, a very nice lady, was exceptionally clear in her enunciation of the English language and she reminded me of how much the language has become degraded through the use of the words "sort of" or "like" or starting a sentence with So,..... If was a delight to listen to her melodious performance.

It did not take long before the child started making noises. They were not actually crying noises but attempts at speaking which occurred irregularly and rather noisily. I have a very low tolerance of background noise and I really wanted to hear what the preacher was preaching about and this was really distracting. Fortunately, the father had the good sense to retreat into the back area and close the door but as soon as they came out again, the noise from the child re started.

In a way, I can understand the situation. Two parents, both believers, want to come to church to celebrate Easter. This is probably the first Easter with a newborn. What do you do? Does one parent stay at home? That seems a bit unfair. What they probably decided to do is to come along and see what happens. On this occasion, the results were not good. And, parents, it's no use grinning at everyone. Your child was disturbing the service. Period. My suggestion is that parents take it turn and turn about to take their child to a place where the cries and expressions of the child cannot be heard. I believe that the desire of the majority to worship in peace be respected.

As I type, I see that at least 207 people are killed and 450 hurt in eight blasts in churches and hotels. I'm talking about Sri Lanka – see above. So, back to the child, the convenience of a few needs to be balanced with the requirements of the many. I don't want to ban anyone but I think we need to be realistic that intermittent crying and screaming does affect the ability to concentrate on important words.

Back to the sermon. The priest was reminding us that without

this event, the rising from death of the founder, we would not be sitting in this church 2000 years later. No matter how many times I hear this sort of thing, it does no harm to be reminded. I love the bit where Mary Magdalene thought that the risen Jesus was a gardener and saying that if he could tell her where the body was she would take it away and bury it. That requires considerable guts. Commentators pointed out that the last enemy was death which had been overcome by Jesus in his actions and his example.

I'm very glad I am a Christian as I believe in life after death is critical to a feeling of security. I like to think that we are a spirit that happens to have a body rather than a body that happens to have a spirit. This gives me extra courage. I subscribe to the St Barnabas society which reminds me that up to 250,000,000 Christians stand risk of persecution either by death, attacks, or family pressure or ridicule. We do not know that we're born from the point of the suffering we do **not** have to endure here in the United Kingdom.