

As the readings and imagery of this past Holy Week take their shape in my mind for another year, I cannot help but be transported back to the times when I have walked the way of the cross through the old city of Jerusalem.

It is possible to set out early in the morning and trace the way through the narrow alleys and passages of the city when everything is quiet and few people are about, but I prefer to lead people at noonday, when the sun is at its highest and the city is all abuzz.

You have to weave your way through crowds of people of all faiths and none. You can find yourself jostled and even spat at if you have a cross with you to lead your procession.

Shop owners will want to distract you into their premises with the lure of untold bargains and children shout and holler with their boisterous games. Road sweeping machines will wait for no one as they honk their way through the gutters. Soldiers barely afford you a glance as they take a smoke break and a loudspeaker from a nearby mosque may drown out your prayer.

No one is going to stop for you or be quiet for you as you make your way between the fourteen stopping places where the next part of our Lord's passion unfolds, reading, praying and singing as you go.

Up on the roof of the Church of The Holy Sepulchre you go, passing by the quiet monks of the Ethiopian church sitting in the doorways of their cells before heading down into the echoing chasm of the church where hundreds of voices are raised in competing liturgies from many languages.

In this one building are housed one of the traditional sites for both Calvary and the tomb in which they laid Jesus and your journey ends up rather inconclusively amidst all the hubbub of the people.

No one will walk the way of the cross and just conclude "well that was nice!"

Pilgrims end up inspired by it or enraged, angry, offended or deeply moved and partly that's because all of humanity is squeezed into those narrow streets and much of it is on the verge of becoming out of control.

It is also to begin to see clearly that the cross is not the end of the story. The cross only makes sense in the light of the resurrection and it is seeing the events of Good Friday with Easter eyes that connections are really made.

In all these loose ends of life, in all this religion, it is only in the Son of God who lived as we live, died as we die and yet is risen for all eternity that every strand of our existence can be woven together.

As we look around at the confusion and turmoil in these days whether we feel this personally, locally or on a global scale - it is trying to see everything in the light of Easter morning that is the key to hope and cause our "Alleluias" to ring with conviction.

For today He is risen amidst it all.

Easter Blessings

Andrew