

Tuesday 11 May

Today is Tuesday the 11 May, in the Sixth Week of Easter.

The monks of the Abbey of Keur Moussa sing, Sur tes murailles. "On your walls, Jerusalem, I set watchmen. Day or night they must never be silent." These words from the Prophet Isaiah speak of the care God has for his people, watching over them at every moment, to guard them, guide them, protect them. As you enter into prayer, ponder for a moment the care that God has for you, how God, even now, is holding you in the palm of his hand.

Today's reading is from the Acts of the Apostles.

Acts 16:23-34

After they had given Paul and Silas a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

That reading gives us two very powerful images – a prison and an earthquake. What does the prison stand for? Loss of freedom, most obviously. But in my life it may remind me of times when I just wasn't able to do what I wanted. Was I locked in by other people's actions? Or maybe by my own weakness, timidity, fear?

And what of the earthquake? What does that stand for? Maybe there have been times in my life when something threatened the very foundations of my life? The end of a relationship, a personal disaster, a time when I was betrayed by someone close to me, perhaps. Can I remember how that felt?



When you listen to the passage a second time listen to the voices: Paul and Silas singing their hymns, the prisoners sitting there listening to Paul and Silas, and perhaps finding some peace and consolation. Secondly, in the middle of the earthquake, listen to Paul's voice: 'We are all here.' Again a voice of reassurance, the voice of one who knows that nothing can disturb the peace that God grants.

In your life, who has been that voice of consolation and reassurance to you? Maybe a friend who has been an immovable rock when your inner self was disturbed and in turmoil. As you remember that person, give thanks to God.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.