

9th July 2020

Sleep

**“Drake he’s in his hammock till the great Armada come.
(Capten, art tha sleepin’ there below?)**

**Slung atween the round shot, listenin’ for the drum,
A’ dreamin’ arl the time o’ Plymouth Hoe.”**

Henry Newbolt, Drake’s Drum

It was 4.30 in the morning, and I had been woken up by the seagulls! It’s common in a seaside village to hear seagulls squawking and screaming at various times of the day, so I’d been wakened by seagulls before. But this was different – because the seagulls were doing a clog-dance on the roof right above my bedroom! I was slung in my metaphorical hammock, “sleepin’ there below”, dreaming about whatever – maybe even Plymouth Hoe – when the seagulls started their racket, bigtime, right above me.

I’ve seen birds in parks sometimes thumping on the grass, the theory being that this bring worms to the surface. Maybe the seagulls are doing the same. But don’t they know there are no worms in my roof? Don’t they realise that, far from the clog-dance providing them with an early morning breakfast, all it does is waken me up – at 4.30 in the morning?

We all need our rest. Disturbed sleep-patterns are hard to bear, whatever the reason. It’s especially common in the aftermath of the death of someone you’ve lived with, slept with, shared everything with for many years. Sleep patterns are very often disrupted, leaving people confused, anxious and, often, quite exhausted. This is a normal and expected part of the grieving process. So we point people to “sleep hygiene” programmes, in books, leaflets and on-line, a set of self-caring actions that will offer a better chance to sleep, and more opportunities to allow our bodies to rest.

Virgil in *The Aeneid*, Book 6, suggests that “there are two gates of Sleep”, the gate made of common horn, with “easy egress to real ghosts”, and the gate of gleaming white ivory, which offers a “way to the light”. I hope, by looking after yourself, and giving yourself the best possible chance, you’ll find the gate to Sleep that offers you a way to peace and rest – especially when the other gate has noisy seagulls all around it!

A prayer for today

Loving God, in life, in thought and in prayer, let me find rest in you. Amen

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