

Once in a while a vagrant comes to the rectory door. I always ask how he ended up in Burnham Market - after all, it's not a place through which people happen to pass (or perhaps they've heard about the scores of unoccupied dwellings here!). I'm usually super-cynical about the inevitable complex and, frankly, contrived stories I get. The more complicated the story, the more it starts to fall apart when the "facts" are challenged.

A recent arrival simply said that he was homeless and hoping for something to eat and drink. No contrived embellishments, just the situation. Fed and watered, he said he would go to the Salvation Army at Fakenham for a bit more help before his continued journey south. (*The SA do such good work; we all ought to make regular contributions: food, clothes, money...*)

The difference between the usual flannel and the recent "that's how it is" version, made me think that the Easter story has the ring of "that's how it was". I can explain the details of Holy Week and Jesus' death with fact and plausible evidence; after all, death is to be our common experience. Resurrection to new life, however, is a different thing: how do we provide evidence of something which, by definition, brought Jesus - and, we dare hope, us, too - a new holy existence, freed of the fetters of our commonality, death?

So much of the resurrection story could have been embellished, as happened with ancient emerging myths. More importantly, so many details could have been left out to make the whole business of Jesus fit our expectations - making Christianity much easier for us ministers to teach!

The Biblical testimony doesn't help, either: recording the unacceptable (according to the custom of the day) evidence of women, the bitter disappointment and disbelief of some of Jesus' closest friends, admitting to the political expectation that some attempt would be made to set up a resurrection. The post-resurrection detail, too, seems so irrelevant: cloths folded up, Jesus asking for something to eat, later making breakfast for his friends on a beach. If you wanted to con people, surely you wouldn't with do it with this.

I can only conclude that the record simply says what happened: Jesus was crucified to death and entombed, a couple of days later he was seen by one (unreliable) witness and two further (unclear) witnesses; then over the following few weeks, hundreds insisting they have seen and talked with Jesus - one of whom refused to accept anything other than the evidence of his own eyes. What's more, Jesus' followers go from hopelessness to rejoicing.

How we respond to all this might still require some faith, but not in a myth. A real event happened and that's what we celebrate.

The plain speaking vagrant's name was Peter. Appropriate.