

One is acutely conscious in this setting of being presented once again with a series of texts cast largely in male terms and in terms of a culture which is largely not one's own and I cannot imagine myself, speaking truthfully, in any other role than the one I've been cast in as priest and male. Luke does follow this with the story of the woman and the lost drachma but, again, it's a man speaking. But in the absence of a woman's take on this you'll hopefully forgive me if I speak, once again, as a man and a priest, or pastor, or padre, with that film still in mind of the Falkland veterans referred to on Wednesday. (The feast of St John Fisher and St. Thomas More)

There's a very moving account in it of two men on the Sir Galahad, caught below decks in horrific scenes of fire and smoke after the ship has been struck several times from the air by Argentine aircraft. One man is making his way out when he hears the cry of a comrade nearby and goes back into the smoke to find him, which he does; he is lying helpless on the ground with one leg missing torn off by the blast of a bomb. He drags him as far as he can but realises the man is too heavy and the obstacles too many to get him out on time before the fire and the smoke overcome them both. So he takes his leave and his comrade pats him on the shoulder to say it's OK. But the trauma of leaving a wounded comrade is too much and, later, on another ship, the would-be rescuer finds a gun from a stock of captured weapons, goes to the stern of the ship, smokes a last cigarette and prepares to do himself in. Two medics appear and ask him his blood group. When he tells them they say, 'Oh we need some of that. Come with us'. He goes and, once round the corner, is very firmly pinned against the wall and the gun removed. All because the ship's padre had been watching and seen him take the gun, and later that same padre is able to reunite the two men on a hospital ship because he had taken the trouble to track down the other man thought to be lost.

It was not, of course, the end of the story. Both men continue to suffer trauma forty years later but I would like to suggest that this male and priestly parable still holds true for all of us today but would love to hear a parable of women, too, told and interpreted by women for today. We need to hear each other.

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