



Father Robbie Low

## THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

4th April 2020

A few days ago, in the Office of Readings, which is part of a priest's daily duty, we were treated to the story (all of it) of Susannah. This text is part of the story of the Book of Daniel. Many Christians will be unfamiliar with it because it is one of the large number of texts that were removed from the Bible by Protestant authorities after the Reformation. Ironically those who 'broke for the Bible' discovered that they didn't like large chunks of it and it didn't fit their schismatic theories. Thus the Word of God was dumped by its noisiest supporters.

Susanna tells the story of a noble and beautiful wife of a local of a respected local dignitary. She comes to the attention of the two elderly judges of the locality who, to cut a long story short, plan to surprise her, threaten her and gang bang her.

Surprising her in her own garden they offer her the choice – either consent to their disgusting demands or they will testify that they caught her committing adultery with a young man who fled the scene of the crime. Susannah has to choose between virtue and death. She screams for help and the inevitable process ensues. Her servants can't believe the story, but the community assumes the judges, the men in authority, must be telling the truth – obviously. Susannah is sentenced to death. At which point young Daniel intervenes.....He calls the people stupid for believing the men just because they are in authority, while refusing to hear the defence of a virtuous woman. Then, taking them separately so they cannot collude, he cross examines the judges and destroys their case. What becomes clear is that one of these would-be rapists has form for corruption and the other is a regular sex offender. This is a technique he has used on countless women who, for fear, have submitted. Susannah is the first one to challenge the wicked and prefer death to loss of virtue.

There is much more (Daniel 13). And there is a light side too. Daniel destroys the old lechers' case by getting them to identify the tree where they caught the lovers at it. They disagree. Frankly if I caught the lady of the manor in flagrante with her personal trainer I couldn't tell you if it was a plum, a pear or a pine tree. My focus would not have been on the flora.

The upshot is that, under the Levitical law – an eye for an eye etc - they receive the punishment that would have been inflicted on their innocent victim, Susannah – the death penalty.

So here we are – two and a half thousand years before the 'ME TOO' movement. One virtuous woman and one outspoken young warrior for justice expose the rottenness. The abuse of power that lies behind the abuse scandals of our time, secular and sacred, is not new. The community were prepared to bow to authority – preferring that cover up to the innocence of the victim. Daniel cannot be the only one who knew these guys had 'form' as sex pests and abusers. It just took the courage to say it and the iniquity was destroyed.

Susannah's a great story. Read it sometime.