

A poem by R S Thomas, called *the Other*, especially penned for those who do like to be beside the seaside:

*There are nights that are so still  
that I can hear the small owl calling  
far off and a fox barking  
miles away. It is then that I lie  
in the lean hours awake listening  
to the swell born somewhere in the Atlantic  
rising and falling, rising and falling  
wave on wave on the long shore  
by the village that is without light  
and companionless. And the  
thought comes of that other being who is  
awake, too,  
letting our prayers break on him,  
not like this for a few hours,  
but for days, years, for eternity.*

R S Thomas was also a priest, vicar of Aberdaron,  
where the Llyn peninsular juts into the Atlantic Ocean.  
A keen bird watcher he used to sit at the very end of the Llyn  
for hours on end, watching for migrating birds to come home.  
I thought of him last week when we chanced upon a chap  
sitting on a garden chair at a very windy Scalby Ness,  
looking out to sea, on dolphin-watch,  
scanning the North sea for his allotted hour.

In Luke's Gospel Simeon spent his time in the Temple,  
watching and waiting for the Messiah: the ultimate dolphin.  
He was full of the Holy Spirit, indeed that same Spirit  
had urged him to watch and wait.

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace  
for mine eyes have seen thy salvation...

At their ordination priests are called to be watchmen,

to watch over the church and the world  
and also to watch for the signs of God moving about his world.  
This seems a very passive role,  
requiring silence and stillness, waiting on God.  
But when you spot God, the most passive role  
becomes the most active role as you share what you have seen,  
challenging, cheering, inspiring others.

We should seek a stillness, a silence in which holiness dawns.  
The Spirit whose mighty coming we mark today  
challenges us simply to stop and wait on God,  
beating against our heart like the waves beat on the shore,  
Such waiting and watching is a form of prayer,  
more important than a myriad words.  
Our Platinum Queen, waiting on us for 70 years,  
should be both our cue and exemplar, because à la R S Thomas:  
the meaning is in the waiting.