



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

19th Sunday Year C

Be prepared

Readings: Wisdom 18: 6-9, Ps 32, Hebrews 11: 1-2, 8-19, Luke 12: 32-48

When I was 11 my best friend, who had been a successful 'Sixer' at his Presbyterian Cub Pack, persuaded me to join him in the newly formed Scout Group where he clearly anticipated further triumphs. We both went along for the first week.

What no-one had told us (or our parents) was that the Church had decided to do 'outreach' among the more difficult youth of our neighbourhood and had, naively, and with some gastronomic inducements, suggested they join the Scouts. As we lined up for the first physical game, I found myself next to a large lad of about fifteen who leant on my shoulder and whispered darkly in my innocent ear, 'If you do what that bloke in charge tells you, me and my mates will punch your head down your neck' I have necessarily omitted the accompanying adjectives for the sake of the ladies.

The choice between upsetting nice Mr. Anderton, the Scoutmaster, and having my woggle double knotted by my new found colleague was not a difficult one.

My school chum never returned. I lasted three fear-fuelled weeks. The Scouts folded by Christmas. That is my excuse for being so practically incompetent. Others, I know, have fared much better and the movement thrives.

It has always struck me that considering the amount of time Jesus spent in the outdoors, his expertise in woodcraft, barbecuing, fishing, endurance work, mountain climbing, outdoor sleepovers, watersports etc. and in all that manly company, it's surprising that he didn't find time to found the Boy Scout movement. But He did give the Scouts their motto 'BE PREPARED'.

If I go gardening at home, at the Parish Centre, at the Retreat House, at my brother's home, I go prepared. Mattock, widger and secateurs will deal with most things the garden can throw at you.

In the spiritual life, outside of the Sacraments, the Rosary – which after all is the New Testament in prayer – and Holy Water will deal with most things. Being Prepared is vital.

Yet for most people this is never the reality. Most folk spend infinitely longer planning their summer holiday than how they might spend eternity. As disciples of Jesus, we are commanded to be 'dressed ready for action'.

(It is the same verb that is later used to describe Jesus serving His disciples. It has nothing to do with aprons ! This awful translation makes it sound like a Masonic Lodge meeting instead of the second coming.)

That means having our spiritual armour on and our weapons ready and ourselves trained and alert and keen. (See Ephesians Ch. 6). He commands us to have our lamps lit. That means not only to see clearly the reality of the times we live in and discern what is happening round about but also, as the army of the Light of the World, to be ready at all times to penetrate the darkness and confront it in the power of the Risen Christ.

We need to know our stuff and live it, practise it regularly.

And that brings me to the other part of being prepared. Being prepared is not just a state of mind or availability of kit. We can all have lots of books on the Faith, or any subject for that matter.

I recall two women friends of mine who were pregnant at the same time. One read a large number of books, the other read a basic primer and went to National Childbirth Trust classes and practised. I offer no prizes for guessing which one had the easier delivery.

So that is the other thing about preparation. It is intensely practical. Most people these days know about doing your 'prep' from the endless wave of cookery programmes on TV.

Lack of 'prep' means you arrive at the key moment only to realise that you haven't soaked your dried mushrooms or oven roasted your fresh ones in garlic, butter and thyme and the Arborio is waiting for them and the grated Parmesan. Gentlemen, we have all been there.

The other time we may have encountered 'prep' is as the public school term for 'homework' for boys who are not going home. It's a good name because it's an exercise for you to demonstrate that you have understood the lesson and can put it into practice.

As disciples we must be constantly doing that. When you leave Mass this morning what will you be taking out with you to the mission field of your lives? What will you be putting into practice and sharing with others so that they may come to know Jesus and answer the central questions of their lives?

Jesus gives His disciples two reasons for being alert, prepared, ready.
The first is so that you will not be caught napping and robbed by the enemy.
(That is effectively what has been happening to Western Christendom in its
acquiescence to aggressive secularism.)

The second is to be ready for the coming of the Lord.

If we, 'the blessed slaves' as the Gospel calls us, are ready when He comes,
Jesus tells us, He will come in and not only dine with us but serve us. It is what
He does on the Calvary and on the altar at Mass. It is what He will do for us in
eternity if we are faithful.

The only questions that matter are these.

Have you prepared for the coming of the Master?

Have you prepared for the Mission?

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