



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

### **5th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B**

***Swifter than a weaver's shuttle my days have passed***

*Readings: Job 7: 1-4, 6-7, Ps 146, 1 Corinthians 9: 16-119, 22-23, Mark 1: 29-39*

Old people say the strangest things. Every Saturday, after morning football, I would go to my other granny's for lunch and spend the afternoon with her. She was full of sayings and bottled wisdom. One thing she often said though, I found, frankly, ridiculous. She would say, 'When you are young, time goes on forever. When you are old time rushes by more quickly with every passing year.'

Although I have been a lifelong opponent of relativism, I have, more recently, had to revisit my over hasty dismissal of Grandma's hard earned wisdom in the light, not only of personal experience, but in the light of Sacred Scripture.

On reflection it seems to me that the years from 0 – 18 years took a lifetime. The next dozen years scarcely increased the pace. The thirties and forties unfolded in a dignified and largely unhurried rhythm. The fifties picked up the throttle somewhat and the sixties have gone by on roller skates. It follows that the seventies, if I am spared (another of my

grandma's regular caveats) the seventies will afford as much time for reflection as hurtling down the Cresta Run on a tea tray.

These ancient memories came flooding back to me as I read today's text from the Book of Job, the great text on suffering. It knows of no hope beyond the grave and, in the light of loss of wife, family, all earthly goods and his own health, Job declares that his eyes will never again see joy. The days are long for the sufferer. He lies in bed longing for the dawn. It rises and he is restless 'til twilight falls. And then this memorable image...

*'Swifter than a weaver's shuttle my days have passed'.*

The furious rattling clatter of the loom, its speed blurring the vision, racing past frantic and all consuming, the warp and weft intertwining in the mysterious tapestry of existence. Nothing more powerfully catches the temporal dilemma of Man.

In Job we encounter the full gamut of our mortality, its speed and its fragility. We do so in the context of a faithful soul that never ceases to trust God but has, as yet, no knowledge of the Resurrection hope.

Contrast this with the writer of this morning's epistle, St. Paul. Here too is a sufferer, a man who has been imprisoned, tortured, shipwrecked, rejected, exiled – a man who has given everything for God and, in losing everything for the sake of the Gospel, considers himself to be rich beyond his wildest dreams. This is how he describes himself and fellow gossellers in a passage of his other letter to Corinth:

*'We are the 'impostors' who speak the truth, the unknown men whom all men know. Dying yet behold we live. Punished but not killed. Sorrowful but always rejoicing. Poor ourselves we make many rich. Penniless we own the world.'*

These glorious paradoxes are only possible in the light of the Resurrection of Christ. St. Paul is in the same boat as Job and you and me. Mortality is our lot and our common enemy. Time is our measure. Death is our common end. But Paul (and you and I) know better. All that is true BUT... our mortality has been taken on by the divinity of God in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

Time has been inhabited by the Lord of Time who has translated the faithful into His eternity. Death itself, our death, has been overturned by the victory of the Cross. Death has not been avoided but taken on in Christ and defeated.

This is why St. Paul is always optimistic. He knows the result and this gives a terrific urgency to his preaching. He longs for others to share it. He is a ransomed sinner and he wants everyone to share in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

He tells us plainly that there is nothing for him to boast about in his preaching the Gospel. It is his duty, indeed the duty of all those who have found salvation in Christ. If he did not do this duty, he goes on, then he would be punished. The actual Greek word he uses is 'WOE'. Woe to me if I do not do it. This is exactly the same word that Jesus uses to condemn the unbelieving cities who have witnessed His words and deeds but have ignored them.

We have just celebrated the Feast of Candlemas, the end of the Christmas season. We witnessed the Spirit-led Simeon joyfully embracing Christ and, in the light of His salvation, been able to welcome death as a gateway not an end. And we see the Spirit-filled eighty four year old Anna encountering the Holy Family and, consequently, evangelising Jerusalem for the Christ Child.

Age is no barrier to our response to Jesus or our capacity to work for Him. Those who have witnessed the love and grace and divine power of Jesus as Lord of all have no option. We have to share the Good News, whatever the cost. Whatever stage we may be at.....the endless years of youth, the gentle procession of middle age or the home straight with 'time's winged chariot hurrying near', there is an urgency about the Gospel and, as always with the Faith, in fulfilling our duty, we will be brought into that paradoxical joy which is the gift of Jesus Christ Himself.

If it is to be '*swifter than a weaver's shuttle*' let us make of the remaining warp and weft of our lives a radiant tapestry of Christ.

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