



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

3rd Sunday of Lent - Year B

Eternal truth

Readings: Exodus 20: 1-17, Ps 18, 1 Corinthians 1: 22-25, John 2: 13-25

When God gave Moses the Commandments He was clearly not thinking too clearly about twenty first century sensibilities. The very word 'Commandment', to our anti-nomian and anti-authoritarian culture, smacks of patriarchal and dictatorial hubris.

'Nobody tells me what to do!' could be the epitaph of my generation. We, being much wiser than old fashioned deistic thinking, are more susceptible to uncritical affirmation, non-directive counselling and consequently to moral indifference. (That is until we transgress the boundaries of the new liberal and libertarian orthodoxies.) Not caring too much about what the other chap does is marketed as tolerance and liberation. There are no horses left in the street to frighten. In fact such Olympian detachment is applauded by the legion of perverse lobby groups baying for an amoral society. Not caring what the other chap does is, in reality, a statement of carelessness, a grave dereliction of duty and a fatal short-sightedness about the effect of such individual disorder upon the health of society and the family of Man.

As Christians, however, we have an attachment to 'The Ten Words' – the Decalogue, which requires some explaining and has nothing to do with personal nostalgia or antiquated thinking. Encoded upon those ancient tablets are foundational understandings of the moral law. It is no accident that we are given the Law as He gives us freedom from slavery and opens the road to grace.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that 'the moral law is the work of divine wisdom.....its PRESCRIBES for Man the way to beatitude/blessing. It PROSCRIBES the ways of evil which turn Man away from God and His love'. 'Law is a rule of conduct enacted by a competent authority for the sake of the common good.'

The competent author for the moral law is the AUTHOR, the Creator. The wisdom of the Creator can be observed and understood by Man for, alone of all beings, he is endowed with reason and discernment and capable of using his freedom for good or ill. This gives Man access to what we call the Natural Law – the ratio of God manifested in His creature. The revelation of the natural law in the personal and societal behaviour of Man rests firmly on that unbroken connection with its origin in the eternal law of God. (In conversation with a recent philosophy graduate last year I discovered that, while bankrupt bunkum like Logical Positivism still gets an outing, Natural Law doesn't even qualify for a mention.)

It is no accident, therefore, that, in the Creation story, the first priority of Satan is to misrepresent God, (Did God really say....?), then to lie about God ('you will not die') and then to seek to overturn His authority in the mind and heart of Man (God's really afraid of you). The Lord of Misrule, the Demonic disorderer, the enemy of Man, seeks always to detach the

reason and sense of Man from His Creator and Redeemer. It should be no surprise that, in our lifetime, the same principle has been at work. The disowning of God does not set Man free but rather enslaves him.

Let us look briefly at the Commandments for simple proof. What society or soul is made free by the elevation of covetousness to an economic principle?

What society or soul is set free by the abolition of property or the implementation of the right to theft, either by great corporations, petty larceny or personal dishonesty?

What society or soul is set free by the manipulation of liars and pedlars of half-truths? This can be from the relativist cliché of 'your truth and my truth' and the denial of objective truth through to the daily contortion of news by the media with their own agenda.

Has family life really improved by the wholesale abolition of the Sabbath?

What society and soul is set free by the abrogation of the ban on murder? The dishonest fabrication of a casus belli to foment war in the Middle East causing the deaths of millions goes unpunished and well paid. The introduction of wholesale infanticide, abortion, gained its sponsor a life peerage and the clinics where these atrocities are performed charitable status.

The detachment of the moral law from its origin inevitably sees the collapse of any identifiable righteousness. It is a recipe for chaos and chaos is an enemy of the freedom and prosperity of Man.

It is no accident that the Ten Words begin as they do with a simple command to have only the One True God, origin of all. No idols, no alternatives, no phoney deities, no false worship, no misuse of the divine name, proper time set aside for time with Him. These first commandments have been gradually eased out of the moral foreground of Western European society. God has been abolished and with Him the Natural Law.

The consequences are already grave. Without repentance and a renewal they will be mortal for the former civilisation that has embraced them.

Listen to two very different voices affirming the ubiquity of Natural Law:-

‘There is a true law: right reason. It is in conformity with nature. It is diffused among all men. It is immutable and eternal. Its orders summon us to duty. Its prohibitions turn away offense. To replace it with a contrary law is sacrilege.’

‘Natural Law is the light of understanding placed in us by God. Through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid.’ It is immutable and permanent throughout the variations of history. Even when it is rejected it cannot be destroyed or removed from the heart of Man. It always rises again in the life of individuals and societies. (CCC1958)

The first voice is the great pagan statesman, Cicero. The second is St. Thomas Aquinas and the Catechism.

We need not fear for the eternal truth – only for those people and societies who reject it.