



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

10th Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year B-For Good Or Evil?

We are missing Jesus

Readings: Genesis 3:9-15, Psalm 129, 2 Corinthians 4:13-5, Mark 3: 20-35

It is often said in jest but in truth that you can choose your friends but you can't choose your family. And that, for better or for worse, is true. Some of us grew up in wonderful families. Some of us grew up in awful families. Most of us grew up in families that were somewhere in between these two extremes. All we knew, as children, is what we were given. What we were born into was, for us, the normal. For most of us the recognition that other people did things differently was a slow realisation. The awareness that some of the things about our own family were odd probably didn't dawn 'til we were long gone from home. The final realisation that there was no such thing as a normal family came even further down the road with the long experience of life. The truth is that many of us have much to be thankful for in our family life – for all its entertaining eccentricities- but, in a profoundly existential sense we remain orphans - orphans of the storm of sin.

Today's readings take us to the heart of our dilemma. We rehearse the shipwreck of our humanity in the Fall of Adam and the exile from Paradise. We hear the words of Jesus reintroducing us to the possibility of return as part of His universal family.

In the Genesis account we see our original parents, Adam – the man of blood and dust – and Eve, the mother of all living, naked and ashamed of their disobedience to God, hiding from the reality of their sinfulness. When God approaches them they are afraid, afraid because they know that they have preferred the words of the deceiver to the mercy and generosity and love of God. Now mired in sin they are not able even to confess. Their instinct is to exonerate themselves by passing the blame down the line. ‘It was the woman...’, ‘It was the serpent...’ etc. etc. As we used to tell the children, ‘Best to say sorry first.’ But that is not the nature of fallen man. It has to be somebody else’s fault. The flight from personal responsibility is on. Everyone is to blame but me. And so the rift in the family grows and remains the vicious and recurring faultline of human history. It is never my fault. It is always someone else’s. In adopting this defence we are, of course, simply showing solidarity with the ‘Father of Lies’, the deceiver. The exile from Eden is now inevitable. St. Dorotheus, in last week’s office of readings, has this to say of our condition, ‘The reason for all human disturbance, if we look to the roots, is that no-one finds fault with himself. We see that this is true in other people yet we hope, in our laziness, that we are on the right path even when we cannot bear to accept any blame ourselves. This is how things are. However many virtues he may have if a man has left the path of self-accusation he will never have peace and all his efforts will be wasted.’

What St. Dorotheus is telling us is only what the Church teaches. The road back to Paradise begins at the foot of the Cross of Calvary, the place where we come face to face with ultimate truth – the cost of our sin and the infinite love of God for His creatures in the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

That is why the Gospel call begins with the invitation to Repent and, in the Resurrection narratives, Jesus grants to His Church the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the absolution of sin. The confessional is the regular port of call of all serious pilgrims because it is both a place of divine encounter and glorious liberation. (It is why we introduce our children to this sacrament before their first communion.)

Fast forward to the Gospel. Jesus is challenged about the very nature of family life and He gives an extraordinary definition which He underlines with His dying breath from the Cross. Today Jesus acknowledges as family those who do the will of God – this is the vocation of the Church and the vocation of the Church's Ikon, Our Lady. Jesus will give His Mother to the beloved disciple so that she may be His mother and he, the disciple, become thereby a little brother of Jesus. Brothers and sisters we are the beloved disciples for whom Jesus died. We stand at the foot of the Cross and receive His absolution. We receive His incorporation into the great family of Faith, the Church in time and in eternity. We are adopted as children of God.

Two weeks ago, at first Holy Communion, I said to you, 'We are family'. This was not sentimentality on my part but a simple declaration of what Jesus tells us today. This is the family of the Universal Church to which we belong. We are to be about His business, the work of the Gospel. In order to do this we need to be regular in our penitential encounter with truth. We need to be regular in our attendance at the 'summit and source' of our Faith, the mystery of the Mass. Only thus will we, and our children, grow in holiness as part of the Heavenly family to which we have been called to belong. This is the family table. When we are missing, we are missing Jesus