



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B-August 12th 2018- Bodmin,
Padstow, Wadebridge, Tintagel

Readings: 1 Kings 19: 4-8, Psalm 33, Ephesians 4:30-5:2, John 6: 41-51

During the darkest years of the Second World War, the later Professor of English Literature at Cambridge, gave a series of radio talks which, when later published as a book, were subsequently acclaimed as the best work of Christian apologetics in that century. The writer was C.S. Lewis. The book was 'Mere Christianity'.

As a reluctant convert, Lewis had come to a belief in God as a result of tireless philosophical pursuit in conversation with friends like Tolkien and Dyson. Two years later he had converted to Christianity on a much simpler proposition. Atonement and reconciliation with God were only possible if God became Man and translated our humanity into His divinity. The only serious candidate for this work was Jesus. All that remained was to assess the given evidence. Lewis formulated the 'trilemma', the three incompatible options.

1) Either Jesus was a deliberate and malicious liar in equating Himself with the Godhead and offering eternal life 2) He was utterly deluded – one pork pie short of a picnic - 3) He was who He said He Was.

In summary.....MAD.....BAD.....or GOD.

(Concluding that Jesus was a good bloke doing His best in trying cultural circumstances is not an option.)

Lewis' equation came back to me on reading today's Gospel. The language is so stark and shocking that, if we had not become immunised by familiarity, we would be as shocked as His original hearers.

(Remember that they do not share the hindsight of history.)

Let me reprise the claims:

Jesus claims that He has direct and exclusive line to the Father, to God's presence and teaching. He has seen God.

Jesus claims that His followers are drawn to Him at the direct will of the Father.

Jesus claims that He will be the One who raises up at the Last Day, He will be the judge and hinge of the Resurrection life.

He claims He is the fulfilment of the prophets, the great go-betweens for God.

He claims that He is greater than Moses and the feeding in the wilderness because His bread gives immunity to mortality. Being sustained by Him is the key to the journey to Heaven.

He claims that the 'Bread' that He will give is His Body, His flesh for the life of the world. His body will be incorporated into ours.

The sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel is one of the most challenging in the whole Canon of Holy Scripture. We are so used to it that we cannot comprehend the shock value of the time. The crowd knew His mum and step dad. Where did He get all this from? The concept of Incarnation was outside the orbit of their thought so the conclusion was that Jesus had either flipped His lid or was blaspheming, committing terrible wickedness by lying about God. As we will see, later on in this Gospel account (on successive Sundays), it is a key moment when many followers walk away in shock or disgust or sheer bafflement.

We, brothers and sisters, are now His followers with the benefit of history. We know now that Jesus was the incarnation of the Godhead

because we have the testimony of Our Lady and the Gospellers. The final resounding proof of this is in the Resurrection from the dead and His Ascension into Heaven. We know now just how precisely and clearly He fulfilled the Word of the

Prophets. How He was the very Word they spoke. We know now His closeness to the Father from the revelation on the banks of the Jordan to the vision of Heaven in the Transfiguration at Tabor. We know now, in the mystery of the Mass, how the transubstantiation of the bread of the offering into His Body continues to nourish the pilgrim people of God. We know now that, as we receive His Body into ours that is both our food for the journey but also our incorporation into His divine life. It is the very engine of our mission and ministry.

We know now because we have a living relationship with Jesus.

Spare a thought then for those who have never known this or walked away. For those who have half heard or misunderstood.

For many people the very fact that we claim to represent Jesus, to speak for God, to offer His divine life, will seem deeply shocking. 'Who do you think you are? We know your mum and dad.', they respond.

For many, in a post-religion Western culture, the options are back with C.S. Lewis' trilemma.

Option 1) The Catholic Church, the Body of Christ on earth – of which are but the latest local missionaries – is, at best, delusional, - slightly, if charmingly, bonkers.

Option 2) The Catholic Church, in opposing the dominant philosophical and ethical developments of our time, is a critical enemy of the culture, politics and jurisprudence of our age and is, therefore, bad with a capital 'B'.

Option 3) The Catholic Church remains, supremely, the place where God Himself calls His children home, in Jesus, and offers the Bread of eternal life for the life of the world.

Mad.....Bad.....or God. We should not pussyfoot around. Those were the options in today's Gospel. They are the same options two thousand years on. This is the choice we are commissioned to offer the world. This is the challenge of the Gospel – to answer the question, 'Who is Jesus?'

Lunatic.....Liar.....or Lord?



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