



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Easter Vigil -April 20<sup>th</sup> 2019

Sixty three years before the birth of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of Mary, the great Roman general, Pompey, rival of Julius Caesar, turned his attention from the successful campaign to rid the Mediterranean Sea of pirates to settling a troublesome domestic dispute in Judaea. In so doing he conquered Jerusalem and re-ordered the state. Unlike Titus, 133 years on, Pompey did not destroy the Temple but restored it rapidly to its proper place. En route to this he entered the Temple, out of curiosity to encounter the God of Israel in the Holy of Holies. To Pompey's enduring astonishment it was empty. No reassuring idolatry, no objects – no thing at all. The Jews, he concluded, were a funny lot. At the end of another Lent, with its physical and spiritual exercises.... At the end of another Holy week with its demanding schedule ..... The full gamut of emotion run, the triumphs of Palm Sunday rolling into the chaos in the Temple, the explosive political situation as the Capital City is 'on hold'. The secret arrangements, the early Passover meal, the clandestine meeting, the nighttime garden, the exhaustion before the real crisis began. The great betrayal of Judas, the lesser betrayals of the fleeing disciples. The rapid descent in horror as the judicial trap springs shut and the trial morphs into torture and the obscenity of the oblation .....the death of hope, the triumph of injustice, the satanic celebration

of the death of God. The lost day, the Sabbath of emptiness and regret – ignorant of the work of Christ, the divine life overturning the power of death and razing Hell.

Thus, exhausted, confused, wrung out, we arrive, with the Magdalene, at the tomb. Grave visitors come to make one last act of love, one final nostalgic farewell, the hope of the world battered, beaten and overthrown.

There, in the garden, we encounter a deeper mystery. The great stone seal rolled back to reveal the empty tomb. Nothing.

The only common ground between the atheist and the believer is the acknowledgement that God is nothing. To the atheists this is a denial of the reality of God. He is nothing. To the believer it is the assertion that God is indeed NO THING. He is not the object. He cannot be contained in idols or in limited human definitions

The God we know and worship is the God who revealed Himself in the Bush of Fire, the I AM, the Supreme being, the very subject of the verb 'to be' – the origin and end of all that is. The God we know is the Creator of all that is who summoned Abram under the star bejewelled desert night sky. The God we know is the Sovereign Lord of all, yet humbled Himself to be born of the line of David. The God we know is the Word who condescended to the tragedy of Fallen Man by sharing his life, his suffering and his death from the Galilean hills to the maelstrom of Jerusalem.

We gaze, with Mary, into the empty tomb. We emerge to meet the Risen Christ. We run with the disciples to check the story and we find only the relics and remnants of His passing. We hear the words of the angel, 'He is not here. He is risen'. We return to our companions and The Lord appears among us. We walk away, despairing, and the stranger who is Christ meets us on the road. We return to our workplace and He

meets us on the shoreline. We ascend the mountain with Him and He commissions us to be Gospellers. He explains the history of salvation to us on the road to Emmaus and we become the Church. We walk with Him down the Bethany Road and witness the Ascent which will guarantee the apotheosis of Man, our place in the eternity of the Divine. We are living out the greatest and most sensational mystery in the history and experience of Man.

The empty tomb is not the void of failure but the proclamation of the triumph of Jesus over sin and death and the beginning of the recognition of the universal and cosmic Christ. Facing our own dying we place our trust in Him whose glorious Resurrection from the dead proclaims the Springtime of Man's hope and the promise of our own, one day, empty tombs