



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Corpus Christi

The Medicine of Immortality

Readings: Genesis 14:18-20, Ps 109, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Luke 9:11-17

Catholics are either mad or they are right.

The Catholic Church is either the most preposterous deceit in history or it proclaims the secret at the heart of everything.

There is no middle ground.

Today, more than most days, that stark choice is before us.

The Feast of Corpus Christi proclaims the Body and Blood of Christ, underscores the revelation of the Mass on Maundy Thursday and asserts the reality of the Divine Presence among us in the sacramental life of the Church.

There can be no greater absurdity to the eye of the secular materialist than to see the worship of a god in whom he does not believe.

But the Church compounds this offence by asserting that this great God, this origin and end of all things, has deigned to become man, to incarnate

in a lowly Jewish carpenter from a Roman provincial backwater and be put to death for His pains. Furthermore, now risen from the dead, He manifests Himself, true God and true man, body, blood, soul and divinity, in the sacrifice of the altar every time the priest celebrates Mass.

To the secular state, God is unreal.

To the secular soul, God in Man is unthinkable.

To the materialist mind, God in matter is downright freaky.

Corpus Christi, therefore, pits us full square against the dominant philosophy of our crumbling civilisation.

There are only two essential narratives running through our current history, the materialist and the religious. This particular version of the materialist is very very new, though it has its roots in the idolatry of most ages, where matter is elevated over eternal reality.

If we take the materialist route then certain things become obvious and indeed necessary.

We have to know that death is indeed the end. There is no room for sentimentality or false hope at the crematorium. We are simply the recycled dust of dead stars. There is no continuity of relationship. There is no over-arching and connective reality. There is no purpose. There is no point. There can be no love, no hate. There is only the interaction of chemicals and the laws of physics. There can be no right, no wrong.

Matter cannot be morally responsible.

The logical outcome of social Darwinism is the Third Reich, the assertion of amoral power for personal self interest. Furthermore, by this philosophy, one cannot even hold Hitler (or Stalin or Pol Pot or Genghis Khan) morally responsible. There is no such formula of accountability available for those without a moral calculus. Nothing we could possibly do to one another is wrong, nor can it matter for: 'If matter is all there is then we don't matter at all.'

The secular materialist narrative totally dehumanises. In the logic of secular materialism I could machine gun the lot of you and have no moral case to answer.

It is the logic of the death camps, of the abortion clinics, of the euthanasia wards. It is why Blessed John Paul II dubbed it, 'the culture of death'.

Thanks be to God, most people who hold these views do not follow the logic of their philosophy individually BUT.... For most of my lifetime this moral deformity has informed and shaped social legislation.

The religious narrative, on the other hand, and the Catholic Christian narrative par excellence, begins from the understanding of the existence of God and that Man is made in His image. All other Catholic theology flows from this.

We understand, because of His self revelation, that there is a first cause, the uncaused cause, the origin of all.

We come to know that creation is intentional and it is good.

We learn that Man is the summit and summation of that created order and that he is made for relationship and love. In this he absolutely reflects the nature of God. He is in His image.

But we also understand that that selfsame image is distorted from its original purity by sin.

We discover that the rescue mission has been undertaken by God Himself, utterly involved in our humanity and transforming it by His divinity, destroying sin and death and fitting Man for reconciliation and restoration to an eternal destiny.

Within this narrative there is both cause and purpose. There is an overarching reality. We are more than dust and ashes. There is the possibility of love and hate. We are capable of relationships that are not solely self-seeking. There is right and there is wrong. There is objective reality and truth. Our deepest instincts reflect a moral universe. We live with an intimation of immortality. Death is not the end of the matter. We are not the flotsam of an ocean of universes nor the jetsam of a cosmic holocaust.

We belong to our origin and our end and we belong to each other.

The religious narrative is the one that has made sense to the overwhelming majority of our fellow human beings throughout history because it resonates with reality.

Corpus Christi trumpets this loud and clear by focussing utterly on the great Sacrament of the Mass.

In Jesus Christ God has completely involved Himself in Man and redeemed him. Presenting Himself in the flesh, 'incarnate', He promises to presence Himself in the very offerings we make at the altar. Bread and Wine become the Body and Blood of Christ and the faithful are fed by this 'medicine of immortality'.

Like Melchisedech of old, who is recalled in today's lesson and in the Canon of the Mass, the priest of the Most High God, we bring bread and wine to the table and the Eternal One, by the power of His Holy Spirit, makes present the one true eternal sacrifice of Christ. Man is reconnected to his maker and to his original destiny.

At the end of the consecration I shall raise the chalice and the paten. They will no longer be the simple gifts you brought up the aisle. I will raise before you the living presence of the Ultimate Reality and the window into eternity and, with you, I shall kneel before the Lord of all.