



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

#### **4th Sunday of Easter Year A**

***NOT 'My Way' but 'Thy Way', O Lord.***

Readings: Acts 2: 14, 36-41, Ps 22, 1 Peter 2: 20-25, John 10: 1-10

*'Regrets, I've had a few*

*But then again, too few to mention*

*I did what I had to do and saw it through without exemption*

*I planned each chartered course, each careful step along the byway*

*And more, much more than this, I did it my way'*

It is the great crematorium hymn of the impenitent and unshriven dead  
and it begins, so appropriately,

*'And now, the end is here*

*And so I face the final curtain...'*

'My Way' has become a sort of anthem for our culture - knowing, assertive, self-righteous, self-glorifying and brim full of utterly misconceived self-justification. It is cocky, smugly self assured and fundamentally untrue. It is, in short, the antithesis of Christianity. And, in my experience usually and ironically sung at the funerals of those men who have achieved zippo.

The Christian take on life begins from an utterly different perspective.

Confronted with the glory of God we are all too aware of His omniscience and our ignorance. Confronted by His holiness we become aware of our utter unworthiness. The nearer we come to the light the more conscious we become of the dark shadows on our souls. (It is no accident that those becoming saints are in the confessional more often than their fellow sinners). 'Depart from me for I am a sinful man', cries St. Peter.

The Christian knows he has no righteousness of his own to advertise. He can only stand in the presence of Almighty God by being clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Our baptismal gown and the priest's alb are signs of just that.

The Christian knows that he has nothing to glorify himself about. He is to be profoundly self aware. With our beloved St. Paul, he will glory only in Jesus Christ and Him crucified because Christ and His sacrifice are the key to understanding God's love for Man and the gateway to life eternal with God. All else is vanity.

The Christian knows that he cannot justify himself. (That was the great British heresy of Pelagianism – it's deep in the national psyche). The Christian knows he cannot put himself right with God. Only Jesus Christ can do that. The Christian will not be standing before the judgement seat of God bawling out,

*'To think I did all that  
And may I say, not in a shy way,  
Oh, no, oh, no, not me, I did it my way'*

Indeed the Christian's whole orientation is utterly other.

We want to sing, with Christ Himself in Gethsemane and with Our Lady at the Annunciation, 'NOT my way but THY WAY'. If we are to pass through the portal of salvation, which is Our Lady, and enter the sheepfold through the gate which is Christ Himself, we are required to follow the instructions of the Gospel.

Both Matthew and Mark record the opening words of the public ministry of Jesus - *'Repent'*.

Today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles has Peter preaching the very first sermon in the Christian Church. His theme? *'Repent'*.

Only when his hearers come to understand who Jesus is, God's love for us in His very self made manifest in Man, and that it is their sins that have nailed Him to the tree, can the work of transformation begin.

Similarly with ourselves and the society to which we witness, nothing will happen until we face these facts in a profound and personal way. Only when we truly comprehend 'salvation', that His blood alone shed for love of us, is the only thing that saves us from the burning rubbish tip of Hell, will our hearts be moved - 'cut to the heart' is how Acts describes that moment. At that moment we will experience God's love and a profound longing to love Him in our souls. At that moment we will understand the urgency of the Gospel for all the other perishing and lost souls. That is the root of missionary zeal to spread the Gospel joy. Christianity is never a political or social programme of self improvement. It is a radical transformation in the depth of all who truly encounter Christ.

The road to that truth leads through repentance, as the Mass teaches us each time we celebrate it and as the confessional confirms each time we drag our weary sin stained souls to the luminous mercy of Christ and His loving liberation in the absolution. Only a penitent church, individually and corporately, can preach repentance to a sin sick dying world.

The mission begins, like St. Peter, on our knees before Christ.

The writer of 'My Way' glorifies his feelings and sneers at prayer. A man, he sings, must 'say the things he truly feels and not the words of one who kneels'.

As we know too well we are a culture suffering from emotional incontinence and feelings are a lousy guide to most things. Give me the man on his knees before the beauty of truth any day.

If the mission of the Church begins on our knees it ends in glory, in the transfiguration of souls, on the road home to the sheepfold of eternal life, in the Presence, freed from sin and death. That is what we want for ourselves and that is what we want, with the longing heart of Christ, for all the children of Men.

NOT 'My Way' but 'Thy Way', O Lord.

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