



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C

We are cross bearers

Readings: Zechariah 12:10-11, 13:1, Ps 62, Galatians 3: 26-29, Luke 9:18-24

In the Importance of Being Earnest, the great Irish playwright, Oscar Wilde, places into the mouth of Miss Prism, this telling witticism: ‘The good end happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.’

I raise this today because this ‘fiction’ is all too often served up as Christianity in a world which is uncomfortable with too much reality. If you ever accidentally channel surf into the cable ‘Gospel’ channels you will encounter a world of extraordinary heresy and financial legerdemain in which fat men in shiny suits try to persuade you that Jesus sincerely wants you to be rich – by making them rich first. And sparkly eyed eager beavers teach religious attitudes that will undoubtedly save you from social oblivion. Snake oil hucksters promise healing – at a very reasonable price. And so on. If you are old or sick or poor or beaten you can be sure that God doesn’t love you or you have done something mighty wrong somewhere along the line.

That’s Karma not Christianity and it’s about Cash not Christ.

It’s counterfeit.

Just how counterfeit it is today's readings from the Word of God reveal. In a strange and enigmatic prophecy of victory the prophet Zechariah alludes to a time of mourning and how that mourning is inextricably bound up with our salvation. He refers to a mourning as great as that for the loss of a first born child and thus deeply personalises it to the human heart. We are in the emotional territory of unquenchable grief.

Zechariah then compares it to the mourning of Hadarimmon in the plain of Megiddo. That will mean nothing to most but it is essential we know what it refers to if we are to understand the profundity of grief.

Zechariah is a post exile prophet, preaching around 520 BC. Exactly a century before him the last great righteous king of Israel, Josiah, was reigning. He had brought the nation back to God after years of idolatry, infidelity and false religion. The Temple was restored, the teaching of the sacred Law revived, the nation restored. All this was swept away in an afternoon by the vast armies of the Pharaoh who destroyed Josiah's army at Megiddo (or Armageddon as it became known). The nation mourned for the death of the righteous king. The puppet kings who followed him led the way to the conquest that would destroy Jerusalem and lead the people into the Babylonian exile.

Zechariah speaks of not only a deep personal mourning of the heart but also a national mourning for the death of the hope of the People of God. The suffering of the righteous servant and his sacrifice echo down the years. It is no accident that the genealogy of Jesus contains the name of King Josiah. It is also no accident that Jesus refers to the prophet

Zechariah in the context of the slaying of the prophets by a corrupt establishment.

So, when we turn to the Gospel, we are not surprised, as the disciples were, by the revelation that the Messiah has come but is to suffer and to die. The disciples, remember, were busy arguing about who would have the best places at court when Jesus became king. Jesus tries to tell them that the road to victory leads through sacrifice.

In Zechariah we are told that this is part of the victory of God for His people. We are told that, in that victory the feeblest will be like David himself and the House of David will be 'like God'. Indeed it will because the final king of the House of David is Jesus – true God and true Man. God incarnate. God with us.

We are told also that as we gaze on what He has done for us, we will be filled with love and prayerful intercession and sorrow for our sins. Then, the prophet tells us, a fountain will be opened in Jerusalem to wash away our sins.

That fountain is the water from the pierced side of the Crucified Lord. (They will look on Him whom they have pierced) That is the water that will fill the fountains, the fonts, of Christendom and bring the faithful to salvation through the death of Jesus.

This is the very Baptism to which the great evangelist, St. Paul, refers in the Letter to the Galatians. It is the primary sacrament of salvation that binds men, women and children, slave or free, from every nation into

the unity of the Church, the Body of Christ, into the eternal kingdom of Heaven.

The price of that triumph is sacrifice.

The water of life flows from the wounded side of Jesus.

The road to the miracle of the Third Day passes through the Calvary.

When we are young in the Faith, or even old but immature, we like to think that being 'signed up to God' will somehow give us an easy ride. That is very human. As Christians we have to remember that we are Cross bearers. As the Saints before us testify, the pathway is often arduous and testing. But as they also bear witness it is glorious and their prayers surround us as we walk the royal road of victory to the Holy City of Jerusalem on high.

Remember that at the Final Judgement the Lord will not ask us if we were successful, but He will ask us if we were faithful.

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