



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

### **19th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C**

***Faith is the proof of what we do not see***

*Readings: Wisdom 18: 6-9, Ps 32, Hebrews 11: 1-2, 8-19, Luke 12: 32-48*

This community exists for one reason. It exists because God, in His infinite love made Man and in His unfailing mercy sent His only Son to redeem us from sin and lead us to eternal life in His Presence. We exist to worship and adore Him and bring the world to the knowledge of that amazing truth. We are a community of Faith or we are nothing.

But we live in a culture which has no place for faith. While religious commitment burgeons in other cultures, the West has largely abandoned any sense of the numinous, any idea of the transcendence of God, any recognition of the immanence of His Presence, any hope in His promises to Man.

So we are in missionary territory.....or worse, for here is a culture that is now truly ignorant of the Faith but supremely confident that it knows what it is rejecting. At its best it is amusedly tolerant of those it sees as needing a psychological crutch or kneels down to talk to an 'imaginary friend'. At its worst it is becoming harshly intolerant of the Word of God and dismissive of the moral and theological virtues that gave dignity to Man and defended his integrity and freedom.

So today's reading from Hebrews is a great encouragement. In it we are reminded that we are not a community washed up on a sandbank of time but rather part of a great and continuous family of Faith throughout the world and throughout time. From the call of Abraham to the coming of Christ the Old Testament gives us endless examples of the triumph of Faith in adversity. From the Resurrection of Jesus to today in our parishes the life of the Church continues to witness to the quest for holiness and the call of the mission.

In that mission, the outreach of God's love, we meet the angry, the confused, the indifferent, the puzzled. What is this Faith of which we speak and by which we try to live. Is it an irrational hope, a fantasy, a fact-free zone? What evidence, modern man cries, do you put in the scale against my reduction of everything to matter.

Hebrews tells us that *'Faith is the reality of what we hope for'* – The Greek says it is the fixed, settled reality and practical outcome. *'Faith is the proof of what we do not see.'* The Greek says it is the proof, the audit, the check out of the unseen reality behind everything.

This is neither fantasy nor fairy story but the result of a living relationship of trust and love between us and the eternal living reality which is God Himself. The establishment of that relationship is the key to cognition, the restoration of confidence and the certainty of our destiny. Understandably we are often asked by less aggressive non-believers how faith comes about and we should know how to answer.

We know that faith is a gift of God. But we also know that, as His children, we are free to ask for that gift. So the seeker must seek the gift. We want to love God but sometimes people start from further off and begin by wanting to want to know the truth. We should never be afraid of that quest for it is ours too.

How do I get faith? Is a question I'm sometimes asked. How do you get Radio 4? You have to put yourself in the way of reception. Buy a radio. Plug it in. Tune it in.

It is the same with us. We come to pray. We learn to listen to God. If people stumbled into our church would they find that quest going on intensely at Mass and in our preparation?

How do I get to know about God? There is the personal encounter in the sacrament. And there is the constant witness in His Word in Holy Scripture. Catholics often tell me that they 'don't do the Bible'. But if you come to Mass or say your offices it is all BIBLE, BIBLE, BIBLE.

The question then is do we listen? Do we seek to understand?

We are not left alone in these matters for the deep wisdom of the Church surrounds us and gives us understanding. Private opinion and personal preference in interpretation is the conceit of Protestantism. But this conceit has increasingly crept into the witness of Western Catholicism. In public life supermarket spirituality and 'pick and mix' religion has become normal. For example the U.S. Vice Presidential candidate is a Catholic. Personally opposed to abortion he supports it legally and in practice. Opposed to the death penalty, he sent eleven to

the gallows in his term as Governor. Regular at Mass, knowing the teaching of the Church, he supports the oxymoron of same sex marriage. He accepted the nomination after 'making himself comfortable' with the knowledge that he will be supporting unchristian and anti-Christian legislation. So, by such, now ubiquitous, betrayals, our public witness is made incoherent and incredible. Such divisions of the person into the private individual and the public figure are inconsistent with Faith at whatever level. The same applies to us at local level when we compromise the Faith for social acceptance or private judgement. Remember - Nobody buys watered down beer.

Faith is a relationship with the ultimate truth, the reality of God. That reality and truth is mediated to us by the Church. If we consistently, deliberately and publicly break faith with that reality we fray the bonds of communion that hold us together in mission and ministry.

So Hebrews reminds us of our historic link with the faith of our forebears. It reminds us of our transcendent link with the divine and encourages us to represent Jesus to the world by the teaching and life of the Church. It inspires us to hold fast to the irreducible truths of God which can, alone, connect us to His ultimate and eternal reality and bring us home.