



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A

My ways are higher than your ways

Readings: Isaiah 55: 6-9, Ps 145, Philippians 1: 20-24, 27, Matthew 20: 1-16

My life has been largely parochial. I do not travel much and even more rarely do I fly. But...I am not a nervous passenger any more. I assume that, if the worst comes to the worst, it will be very quick. I offer a simple 'Hail Mary', face forward, relax into the seat and armrests and prepare for the surge of power that will, contrary to my primitive reason, take me airborne. For the duration of the flight I read or occasionally look out of the window to observe this extraordinary period of the suspension of normal reality and my relative liberation from the demands of gravity. Well-meaning friends can explain the science of my temporary elevation but it still seems pretty miraculous to me and, enjoyable though it is, I am always grateful to be re-acquainted with my regular milieu of earth, the dust from which I am drawn and to which I shall return.

This little picture of my technological innocence (I still wonder how Saint Nicholas gets into houses that have central heating pipes instead of log fires) this image came into my mind while reading the Isaiah text for today's Mass. I am reminded that, for all the wisdom I have so evidently accumulated on this earthly pilgrimage (let the reader understand), this is as nothing before the mind of God. Even the bits of the picture I have actually

got are those that He has revealed to me. When He says that His ways are higher than my ways, His thoughts higher than my thoughts, He is not talking geography here nor even the dislocation between my earthbound and skyflown human experience. We are talking dimensions..... and beyond the fourth.

What is most extraordinary is that, like my unreasonable trust in air travel, my trust in the One who reveals what I need to know of Him to love Him is all that is required of me to begin the ultimate ascent – humanity into divinity in Christ. This is possible because, unlike the pagan gods which are idols made in the image of Man, we worship the One true God who has made Man in His own image and therefore capable of communion with Him.

Of course I want to see the whole picture....Like the workmen in Christ's parable we are often more interested in how the Master is dealing with the other bloke rather than being grateful that he called us to work in the vineyard in the first place. There are echoes here of St. Peter's later enquiry about what will happen to the Apostle John and Jesus' enigmatic reply. The gist of it all is, 'What's that to you. You get on with the job you've been given.'

In human terms our need for greater vision of the current whole is understandable. But in divine terms it would be the equivalent of every private soldier on the battlefield requiring a personal briefing from the Field Marshal before returning to post and agreeing to carry out his duty. A recipe for anarchy and defeat. When the smoke of battle is at its thickest

and the result apparently hanging in the balance it helps, I find, to recall Blessed John Henry Newman's famous hymn:

Lead kindly light amid the encircling gloom

Lead thou me on

The night is dark and I am far from home

Lead thou me on

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene; one step enough for me.

To some of the servants of God, it is true, that it is given to see the bigger picture more clearly. These are the prophets. These are the watchmen on the towers of Israel. They are given the task of saying unpalatable things to a disobedient people. They are charged with spelling out, often to comfortable and prosperous societies, the ruin that they face in abandoning God. One does not need to read much of the Bible to discover what a thankless and dangerous task this is. Resentment, persecution, exile, martyrdom were the usual lot of the heralds of God. The pain of bearing the Word and seeing the visions all too often broke their hearts. So, when we say that we would like the bigger picture we should remember that it usually comes at a price.

What we long for, of course, is an insight into our own time and our part in it. Because, in reality, God has given, to all who follow Jesus and honour the Divine Word, the insight into His Cosmic plan. We know from the Creation, from the Fall of Man, from the raising up of a People of God and from the long winding history of Salvation. We know from the Divine condescension of God in the Incarnation of His Son, Jesus. We know from His triumph over

sin and death on the Calvary. We know from the Resurrection of the Body. We know from the Ascension of that transformed humanity the ultimate destiny of all in Christ. We do actually know the bigger picture – it is the Gospel.

This is what God gives to us every time we pray or offer praise, every time we kneel in loving silence before the Blessed Sacrament or receive His Body and Blood in the mysterium of the Mass – the summit and source of our Faith, the Real Presence of the All Holy.

For the present state of the battle in our time and in our place listen to the prophets. What Jesus asks us to do is get on with His work in the vineyard. We need not concern ourselves with what reward the other servant will get. It will be the same as us – Salvation.

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