



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

## **Easter Vigil Year B**

### ***Overcome with Paschal Joy***

*Readings: Genesis 1:1-2:2, Ps 103, Genesis 22:1-18, Ps 15, Exodus 14:15-15:1, Exodus 15:1-6, 17-18, Isaiah 54:5-14, Ps 29, Isaiah 55:1-11, Ps 12, Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4, Ps 18, Ezekiel 36:16-28, Pss 41, 42, Romans 6:3-11, Ps 117, Mark 16:1-7*

Watch afternoon television for any length of time and one thing becomes clear. We are all going to die. And we need to prepare for it. This, of course, means taking out life insurance with Michael Parkinson so that our funeral is paid for. The rest of the time, while we wait for the grim reaper, is best spent otherwise on distracting cruises to pleasant places in the company of our fellow geriatrics. Nowhere, in this scenario, is there any real preparation for the ultimate reality of our final journey. Most people spend more time planning their summer holidays than preparing for eternity.

Thus, brothers and sisters, we pursue the great pilgrimage of the Faith in the midst of a conflicted and infantile culture. Listen to the media or the common talk and we hear a range of possible scenarios. From the militant atheist – death is the end and it is our right to arrange it – to the family crematorium fantasy where, with the help of collaborationist clergy, Grandad is pictured on a virtual deckchair in some celestial

Lanzarote having a hoot with his old mates. A sort of sanitised Valhalla. Well-meaning parents kneel beside small children and explain that Grandad is now a star in the sky and other sentimental tosh. Chesterton was quite right. When people stop believing the truth, they will believe anything, however ridiculous.

Christianity confronts the potential tragedy of our mortality head on. At its heart is a God who enters into our mortal dilemma, in the person of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. On the Cross of Calvary Jesus takes on our fallen fate of suffering and death and, in the supreme sacrifice of love and absolution, defeats the final enemy of Man, restores him to the original dignity God intended for him and, at the price of His own life's blood, reconciles us to our loving Father and, in the miracle of the Third Day, invites us into the Eternal Presence.

As we meet here in the pre-dawn dark of Easter Day, we rehearse the great history of our salvation and rekindle the confusion and wonder and excitement of that first Easter Day, the revelation of the Resurrection from the dead in Christ Himself.

In the garden of sorrows we encounter the angelic presence who proclaims the sensational news, *'He is not here. He is Risen.'*

The angels who greeted Our Lady in Nazareth, sang in the skies over Bethlehem, ministered to Christ's agony Gethsemane, now proclaim the triumph. These same angels worship with us in our Mass - which is always a celebration of the Risen Lord and our destiny in Him. *'Therefore, overcome with paschal joy every land, every people exults in your praise*

*and the heavenly powers and angelic hosts sing together the unending hymn of your glory.....'*

The spice bearers, preparing for the dead must now prepare for eternal life.

The disciples running to the empty tomb must prepare for the encounter in the Upper Room and their commissioning as Apostoli – the messengers of God.

The Magdalene, encountering the stranger, will hear her name in a new dawn and recognise Jesus.

The disappointed, dejected and defeated travellers on the Emmaus road will hear the Scriptures explained and come to understand the mystery of the Presence in the breaking of the bread. Hearts on fire, they will return to the fellowship of the Holy City.

The night wearied fishermen on the Galilee will hear the shoreline call and, naked and nets bursting, will meet the Lord in the dawning of the day and, reconciled and restored, go out to convert the world.

This is who we are, brothers and sisters of Jesus. This is the greatest good news of all the ages. We are the bearers of these tidings to all mankind. They are at liberty to reject the love and life of God. But they should know what is offered here. Here is no fairy story, no fantasy, no futuristic philosophy.

Here, in the midst of our flesh and blood is the life of God. Here in the depths of our fallenness is the hope of restoration and renewal. Here in this little corner of time is the promise of eternity. Here, in this mortal ruin, Christ has given us immortality. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.....and with Him all our tomorrows and beyond all ages. To the Crucified and Risen Lord be endless glory. Amen.

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