



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Good Friday

Abandonment to Divine Providence

Readings: Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Ps 30, Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9, John 18:1-19:42

When I first offered myself for ministry some 43 years ago a wise old spiritual director lent me the slim volume of Jean Pierre de Caussade's classic, 'Self Abandonment to Divine Providence'. It was terrifying and I felt utterly out of my depth. All that stopped me abandoning my vocation was the simple trust in God that mysteriously overrode the dizzying complexities of these apparent demands.

The nearer we get to the Cross, of course, the nearer we get to realising that this abandonment to Divine Providence is to follow the way of Jesus Himself. For the Cross itself is the final statement of Divine Providence. It is where God Himself, in His only begotten Son, *provides* the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. It is where God dwelt humanity breaks down the fortress of death by entering into it and raising up the otherwise doomed mankind. God's provision, His *providence*, is beyond our wildest dreams, beyond our most extravagant imaginings and certainly beyond our mortal comprehension.

To those outside the Faith the mystery of the Cross is, as Paul puts it, a *'stumbling block to the Jews, folly to the Gentiles'* but, to those whom God has called, *'the power and wisdom of God'*.

Today we stand before the Cross of Jesus and, in a few moments, will come forward to venerate this strange device of God's amazing love. To the world it may look like a gruesome homage to a grisly death. To the believer it is the gateway to eternal life. To the sceptic it is but an instrument of torture. To the believer he understands that, in Christ, the arms of God stretch out in love to embrace the universe. To the agnostic here is a dead beam pointing skyward. For the believer here, disguised in blood, is the very Tree of Life that links earth and Heaven and is the centre of the Garden of Paradise.

Upon this wood of the Cross hangs the Saviour of the world. In His humanity he proclaims His thirst – but also a thirst for righteousness and justice. In His divine mercy He forgives His persecutors and He promises paradise to the dying penitent. In His loving foresight He grants the Motherhood of Mary to beloved disciples, making us kin, little brothers and sisters of Jesus. In His abandonment He begins the psalm of desolation, *'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me....'* Christ is in solidarity with our humanity in the loneliness of suffering and death. But we know also that the great psalm of the Crucifixion does not end there. The dying Christ does not have the breath for the whole psalm. We know that it speaks, in forensic detail of the suffering of the Calvary. But we also know that it ends in a song of triumph. The prayer of the suffering servant will be heard and.....

All the ends of the earth

will remember and turn to the Lord,

and all the families of the nations

will bow down before him,

²⁸ *for dominion belongs to the Lord*

and he rules over the nations.

²⁹ *All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;*

all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—

those who cannot keep themselves alive.

³⁰ *Posterity will serve him;*

future generations will be told about the Lord.

³¹ *They will proclaim his righteousness,*

declaring to a people yet unborn:

He has done it!

It is in this certain conviction of the Divine Providence of the Father that the Son can abandon Himself and proclaim....

'It is finished. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.'

As we kneel to kiss the Cross of Jesus let us joyfully and gratefully abandon ourselves to the Divine Providence, the highest hope of our humanity. And though the Providence of God leads through the Calvary we need not fear it for it is, at once, the path of life and the portal of the Eternal Presence – both hidden and revealed in the mystery of the Mass.