



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year B 2018

Sclerder Abbey & Liskeard

In the company of Angels and Saints

Readings: Ezekiel 17: 22-24, Psalm 91, 2 Corinthians 5: 6-10, Mark 4: 26-34

Today is designated as 'Life Sunday'.

This is a hard sermon to deliver and a hard sermon to hear so I ask for your prayers.

On the 22nd May this year there was a memorial service on the anniversary of the terror attack on the Manchester Arena. In attendance were the Prime Minister, the Leader of the opposition and Prince William. The service was also relayed to Liverpool and Glasgow Cathedrals and York Minister. A national minute's silence was proclaimed. This national event was to remember the 22, mostly young, victims of the bombing of Manchester Arena by Salman Ramadan Abedi, a young Muslim, whose wickedness was condemned at the time as a product of a 'warped and vicious philosophy'.

While those who lived through the war – and set aside one day for the memorialisation of millions- may be puzzled by the modern tendency to

memorialise every disaster, outrage and tragedy as national events nonetheless it is how things are done these days. What is most intriguing to me, as a Christian priest, is the coincidental number of the victims of the Manchester attack and the terms of condemnation used to describe the terrorist.

Twenty two innocent people lay dead as a result of his wickedness.

Twenty two is the number of innocent lives that are ended.....every hour..... in the abortion clinics of our country.

The very same politicians who wheel out to lament Manchester were quick off the mark in supporting Ireland's lamentable and tragic farewell to its Christian heritage in the recent referendum and the ending of the protection for the unborn. They do so because they have embraced a 'warped and vicious philosophy' which kills, not occasionally, randomly and sporadically but by the hundred thousand and on an industrial scale. They call themselves 'compassionate' and 'progressive'. The organisations that do this, in the usual perversion of language, are designated as 'charities' – performers of acts of love and mercy.

The Catholic Church is now the only organisation that stands across the world in opposition to this deadly creed. In doing so she has a difficult task because she must continue relentlessly to attack the philosophy and culture of death while at the same time offering hope and mercy and the possibility of reconciliation to those women (and men) whose lives have been overshadowed by this unfolding tragedy. Love the sinner. Hate the sin.

I need therefore to say two things.

One on the philosophy that has led our societies to this pass.

The second on how Christ, in the sacraments, can heal the broken hearted.

First the philosophy.

Historically the rejection of the One true God has always led down this path. The Old Testament is littered with the damage of the return to paganism – for this is what it is. Attracted by the false gods of materialism, the society rapidly descended into hedonism, libertinism and promiscuity. The resulting fruits of this, the unwanted children, were regularly sacrificed to alien gods in the Valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem. This was, in Jesus' time, the rubbish dump. It was also the place He used as an image of Hell, 'Gehenna' – the place where the future was sacrificed.

Fast forward to our own time. Within twenty years of defeating a eugenic tyranny that classified whole peoples (Jews) as not really human, we had accepted a philosophy that denied fundamental human rights to a whole category of people (the unborn). The unborn have become the Jews of our time. We have done this in response to a philosophy that emanates from materialism and finds its expression, inter alia, in a feminist imperative that posits a false doctrine of humanity and attempts to buck the reality of human biology. In my lifetime this philosophy has ended more lives than fascism. It is a terrifying thought.

As Catholics we know this and we will not and cannot surrender this sacred ground for the defence of the innocent. But we also have a duty of love and care to those who have been wounded by their participation in monumental sorrow.

What can be done?

The reality, I know from forty years of pastoral conversations, is that those who have gone through this trauma, voluntarily, unwillingly, in panic or in ignorance, carry an immense burden of regret and, to them, what seems unresolvable distress. There is also the sheer loneliness – who can you possibly talk to about such a thing? The lost child is never forgotten, always mourned in the secret places of the heart. Here the secularists have nothing to offer. The Church of God can offer much. First of all in the Sacrament of Reconciliation there is the possibility of the acknowledgement of the most difficult truth, face to face with God and in the company of a fellow sinner, the priest, in absolute confidence. What you cannot forgive yourself for, God can. More than that God longs to welcome you home from the loneliness of sin into the warm embrace of His unfailing love.

But the ministry of the Church does not end there. Having received the Sacrament of Liberation, the great Sacrament, the Mass, beckons for the final act of reconciliation and restoration. That little life that you had thought lost is not lost in the mercy of God but remains infinitely precious and in the presence of God. Here, we can finally name this loved and lost child. Here, privately, we can make this child's life the intention of the Mass. Here, before the altar of God's mercy, in the Presence of Jesus Christ, we can offer our little human love across the boundaries of Heaven and Earth. Here, in the company of the angels and saints, we can be reunited and reconciled with the little ones, our prayers of love for them, their joyful prayers for us at this final long awaited recognition and homecoming.

Only the Catholic Church can offer both unbending resistance to the philosophies of the enemies of Man and, at once, unfailing love and the mercy of God to all who long to be reconciled and healed.

We know this because we are sinners ourselves and stand here only because of that extraordinary and profligate generosity of God in the gift of the babe in the arms of Mary.

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