



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Corpus Christi-The Body and Blood of Christ Year B

We kneel before the beauty of the Grail

*Readings: Exodus 24: 3-8, Psalm 115, Hebrews 9: 11-15, Mark 14: 12-16
22-26*

CORPUS CHRISTI 2018 Bodmin

Followers of popular culture and readers of rattling good yarns will, no doubt, be familiar with the premise of Dan Brown's international bestseller, 'The Da Vinci Code'. The Holy Grail is not the chalice used at the Last Supper but rather a code for a secret that the wicked and deceitful organisation, the Catholic Church, cannot ever allow to become public knowledge. The Holy Grail or, as he prefers it, *sang real*, is not a vessel in the normal sense but rather the holy blood line of Jesus Christ. The 'vessel' was his wife.....you've guessed it, Mary Magdaleneand the blood line travels down the centuries via successive generations of their offspring.

This leap of imagination by Brown was aided in no small degree by a work of pseudo-history entitled 'Holy Blood and Holy Grail'. In it we are invited to see the blood line appearing in the dynasty of the early Merovingian kings of France and a secret organisation, the Priory of Sion, dedicated to the return of that sovereignty over a united states of Europe. (I'm surprised it didn't appear in the Brexit campaign.) All this inevitably tangled up with the essential element of all conspiracy theories, the Knights Templar, the mysterious fortune of a dodgy French

priest and the enigmatic paintings of Nicholas Poussin all makes for a heady brew.

Unfortunately the whole shooting match turns out to be based on a series of historical hoaxes and forgeries. Most disappointing of all for the religious conspiracy buff is that, were it to have been true, the descendant of the Messianic royal couple currently awaiting recognition and elevation to supra-national sovereignty turns out to be an unprepossessing French accountant called Mr. Plantard.Back to the drawing board.

Everyone knows the Messiah cannot be French.

Here we have our own legends and ones of more substance. In our own parish, thrust out from the Atlantic coastline, is the Dark Age settlement of Tintagel Head. Here, legend says, the once and future king, Arthur, was conceived. High on the bluff remains a stone altar, the marks of consecration worn but distinct, where the Mass was offered. From here the story unfolded that led to the quest for the Grail. The Knights of the Round Table set out to seek the mystic chalice, the bearer of the Blood of Christ, brought to these shores by Joseph of Arimathea from the Cenacle and the Calvary.

The vision that is granted to the seekers is obtainable only by the pure in heart. From the legends of Geoffrey of Monmouth through the epic of Parsifal, written by de Troyes and immortalised in Wagner's greatest opera, where the Poor Fool for Christ's sake witnesses the procession of the acolytes bearing the candles, the Bleeding Lance of Christ's sacrifice and the beautiful Grail bearer with the single Host of the Presence therein, the story of the Grail infuses Western culture.

Today, on this special feast, we as Catholics proclaim a monumental and central truth. We are the seekers of the Chalice of Salvation. We are the bearers of the Bread of Life. Like the committed warriors of the Round

Table, like the Twelve at the Last Supper, we are dedicated to the overthrow of evil and, by a pure heart, to seek the divine encounter. The truth that we all know, who follow the quest, the pilgrim way, is that the great secret of Christendom is hidden in plain sight, in full view.

We know where the Grail is.

Listen to the words of consecration in the Roman Canon which we will pray a little later on in this Mass:-

‘In a similar way, when supper was ended, He took **this** precious chalice in His holy and venerable hands and, once more giving thanks, gave the chalice to His disciples saying,

‘TAKE THIS ALL OF YOU AND DRINK FROM IT, FOR **THIS** IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD, THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT WHICH WILL BE Poured OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.’

The Holy Grail of all our seeking, is present on the altar of every Catholic Mass. The great ornate chalices of the Basilicas, the humble vessels of the poorest parish’s Mass contain the true Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. It is this truth of the Presence of the pure, holy and spotless victim that emboldens the priest to pray that God may command his holy angel to bear this sacrifice to the very altar of Heaven so that we may be filled with every grace and heavenly blessing.

This is the Grail.

As we receive from this sacred vessel, we become the Grail, bearers of the sacrifice, bearers of Christ into the world.

The Mass does not end at the door of the church.

At the end of this Mass we will commission the extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. They will represent the ‘ordinary’, the priest, just as the priest represents Christ in the Mass. They will stand there knowing that

they are not worthy to do this any more than I am worthy to stand at this altar and minister. In the words of the old mass, Non sum dignus. I am not worthy.

We are able to do this by His grace and His calling alone. It is truly an extraordinary task. To bear the Grail. To bear Christ into a broken and sinful world. To share the secret of the mysteries of eternity and the life of God.

In the humdrum and hurly burly of the everyday we may often lose sight of this glorious vocation. It is why we return again and again to the holy table of the Last Supper . Here, behind the procession of the candles and the bloodied lance, the sign of sacrifice, we kneel before the beauty of the Grail and the revelation of the Host. You hold in your hands the secrets of the universe and its Lord.

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