



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year B-November 4<sup>th</sup>- 2018-Bodmin

***Readings: Deuteronomy 6: 2-6, Psalm 17, Hebrews 7: 23-28,***

***Mark 12:28-34***

A few weeks ago, at the evangelisation group planning and prayer meeting, I asked if anyone would like to suggest a topic they would find useful to cover in a brief Advent course. To my delight Mick Corcoran immediately replied, 'Christ in the Old Testament'. It is a massive subject. Understanding where the Second Person of the Trinity, who will manifest incarnate in Jesus the Christ, operates in and through the history of salvation is, however, a central key to grasping the magnitude of the Faith we profess. The upshot is that we will have a simple introduction to this huge enterprise on the Wednesday evenings of December 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> at the Parish Centre between 7pm and 8.30pm. At the end of it the aim is that you will be better able to read and understand the Old Testament and have a clearer view of the enormity of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Never say we are not ambitious !

Last week we had the Letter to the Hebrews helping us comprehend the transformation of Old Testament priesthood into the High Priesthood of Christ. Today we are given direct continuity in the readings from Moses to Christ.

It is a commonplace that the Old Testament is Law and the New Testament is Grace. There is an element of truth in that but it is an

oversimplification. Listen again to Moses from the book Deuteronomy the second giving of the Law.

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.

Let these words be written on your heart.’

This is called, ‘The SHEMA ISRAEL’ - the foundational creed of Judaism.

So when one of the Scribes questions Jesus, checking if He is kosher, he asks Jesus for the Great Commandment and Jesus faithfully replies with the Shema.

It is one of the great and revelatory moments in the history of Man’s religious journey. In one simple statement the unity and uniqueness of God is proclaimed and the dark night of paganistic polytheism is swept away. Idolatry and fear are replaced by communion and love.

Moses enjoins obedience to the Law on God’s people. That is because, as with our own children, we teach the ways of love by consistency, encouragement and obedience. A child that lacks these gifts is an unhappy child. A parent that does not exercise these caring gifts abdicates their sacred and unique vocation.

(The Canadian Clinical Psychologist, Jordan Peterson, wrote:

Don’t bring your children up to do things that will make you not like them.’)

But it is not simply about obedience – the Law gives us targets and parameters.

Moses speaks of love. He understands that if you do not love the truth, you will not tell it. If you do not love the Way, you will not walk it. If you do not love the Lord you will not follow Him.

And love is not a romantic preference. It is an all-consuming passion.

Both Moses and Jesus confirm that this must be a love of the heart – that central seat of the passions of Man through which his life blood flows, the

engine house of his mortal frame. It is a physical commitment.

But it is also a love of the soul. Our eternal identity, the cockpit of our eternal flight, must be utterly engaged in the ascent to the heights of divine encounter.

Jesus adds an extra point here. He says we must love God with all our minds – or in my case what’s left of it. Our *ratio*, our reason, our intelligence is to be fully engaged. We are not a mindless, ecstatic sect or a group of infantilised hummers of religious nursery rhymes. We are made *imago dei* –in the image of God- and, through His self-revelation in Christ, we can pursue the Divine Wisdom. The coherence and consistency of the Faith has a truly amazing beauty which we can appreciate and love with our minds. It is not for nothing that the Church has been a great provider of education and seat of learning at her best.

‘And with all your strength’. In this love affair of our lives nothing less than passionate commitment will do. We know in the figure of Christ on the Cross, the sacrifice at the heart of the Mass, that there is nothing God will not do for us. Our love for Him must be the same sacrificial love. That is why we bring ourselves, in our offerings, to the altar, our love offered with His. All committed

Finally, Jesus adds this to the Shema.....

‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

I have often heard this interpreted as an invocation to self-love, self worth, self esteem. I don’t need to tell you, brothers and sisters, that this just doesn’t cut the mustard. (Look around you at our society for the abject and predictable failure of that particular heresy). Why? Because my self-love is entirely emotionally determined and utterly subjective. Some days I feel a million dollars – some days a plugged nickel. What grounds me in the truth and gives me the courage to carry on is to know that I am loved, by other people for sure – though that may change - but above all by God – and that will not change.

Many of the sins we bring to the confessional, pride, anger, jealousy, gossip, anger, resentment spring from insecurity, not knowing ourselves loved, forgetting the One who loves us. Only when we are reassured of this amazing truth in the great sacramental encounters can we get on with the job of being missionary disciples, of loving the world Jesus came to save.

‘Hear, St. Mary’s, Bodmin, the Lord our God is one Lord. Let us love the Lord our God with all our heart with all our soul with all our mind and with all our strength .....and our neighbours as ourselves.’

Let’s do it.