



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

2nd Sunday of Advent-Year C-December 9th 2018

Bodmin

Readings: Baruch 5: 1-9, Psalm 125, Philippians 1: 3-6 8-11, Luke 3: 1-6

Facts.

The fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius. Pontius Pilate governor.

Herod, Philip, Lysanias – Tetrarchs.

High Priests Annas behind the throne of Caiaphas etc etc.

Facts flow from the pen of Luke, the Gospeller, Luke the Doctor, Luke the companion of St. Paul, Luke the confidant of the Blessed Virgin, LUKE THE HISTORIAN.

While John introduces us to the cosmic significance of the Christ and the symbols of time weave into eternity and Mark hurries us from place to place with evangelistic urgency and Matthew makes sure we don't miss a trick of the fulfilment of the Jewish Messiah, Luke nails down the history. The coming of Christ is at a particular time. It is in a particular place. We know the context. We follow the story. We can identify the people. This is for real.

Why does this matter? It matters because Luke and the Apostles preach the Gospel of Jesus in a culture wedded to divine myths. The godlets of paganism are an invention of Man. They are projections of the best and, all too often, the worst of Man. They are immoral and capricious. They

are not real. They are simply mythos. Their acts are not in time. Their divinity is as dysfunctional as it is remote from reality. Their notional relationship with Man is exploitative, cruel and unworthy. The rapacious exploits of Apollo would disgrace a pervert. The testosterone fuelled devotions of Mithras are closer to the Bullingdon Club than they are to communion.

Luke is putting down a marker. This divine intervention in the history of Man is genuinely historical. It is not like the gods of Ancient Greece and Rome. It is not like the Hindu Pantheon of the subcontinent. It is not like the mystical atheism of its offspring, Buddhism. It is far removed from the extra-contextual visions and railings of judgement of the self-proclaimed prophet of Arabia.

Christianity is not a religion of myth or magic. It is not a manufacture of cloistered mysticism or cultic memory. Christianity is neither a political scheme nor a philosophical argument nor a prophetic catalogue. It is a profound, earthed, historical engagement with the reality of the relationship between God and Man, the final determinative encounter at the climax of the long and winding path of salvation.

You want chapter and verse of the Incarnation of God and the subsequent apotheosis of Man? Here it is.

It is why Holy Scripture matters so very much in the life of the Church. It is the Book of the Church. It is the astonishing account of this relationship and ultimate reality. It is not the musings of one man nor the effusion of a multi-faceted culture. It is the record of the huge number of major stars and bit part players in the drama of salvation. We may well not like all we read because it records the worst as well as the best of Man, be they sinner or saint. The Book of the Judges makes uncomfortable reading. The failures of Peter are embarrassing. David's great kingship is flawed. Solomon's wisdom runs out. Jesus chooses

Judas. Paul and Barnabas fall out spectacularly. etc. etc.

What this tells us is that this is not a fairy story composed of synthetic archetypes. It tells us that this is not a series of plastic hagiographies in which the faults of the human heroes are rubbed out by an editor's pencil. What we have is reality – a reality that we can relate to and make sense of. It is not a 'story' but a history of which we are but the latest part. That is why Luke, God bless him, begins as he does and nails it down. This is the who, the why, the how, the where and the when of all we need to know to make the decision that will determine our final destiny and the eternal fate of all mankind.

In the fifteenth year of reign of Tiberius (29AD) the word of God came to John.

The rest is history.