



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Advent Carols-9<sup>th</sup> December 2018-Bodmin

Three days ago the Church celebrated the feast of St. Nicholas, patron saint, among other things, of children. In my old parish we used to have a St. Nicholas party for the very young children. At the height of the festivities the children would gather in the hallway and St. Nicholas himself, in full bishop's vestments would appear at the top of the great staircase, descending as they sang his favourite carol. In the saint's hand was a great and ancient book which contained extraordinarily accurate details of each child's behaviour.

'Peter', St. Nicholas would say, 'You have been very unkind to your little sister.....but you have been very helpful to Mummy in the kitchen.'

'Lucy, you never tidy your bedroom.....but have learnt your numbers well'

You can imagine the stunned looks on the faces of the little ones.

How did he know?

The whole procedure is, for the adults, a metaphor of the Last Judgement. Just as the children are astonished by forensic knowledge of their lives, their virtues and their failings, so we seem to be amazed that God could know everything about us. It is not comfortable.

The Advent season is about waiting for the arrival, the Adventus, of the Lord. Just as the children wait for St. Nicholas, so we wait for Jesus. Almost all of human history has been Advent waiting – waiting for the Coming of Christ then waiting for His return.

In our excitement or familiarity we often forget the reason for His coming. Christ comes to set us free from the bonds of sin and death. He comes that, through Him, our original destiny may be restored, to dwell in eternity with God.

All this was lost with the Fall of Man and the genetic poison of Original Sin. We are fatally flawed creatures, now beset with sin and doomed to die. The gates of Paradise shut behind Adam and Eve and we, their successors, are exiles from the Presence and the Tree of Life.

In order for that to be reversed God must come as Man, of an Immaculate Mother and incorporate us into His eternal and divine self in Christ.

In Adam we are doomed to alienation from the love and mercy of God. In Adam we are destined to return to dust. If we do not understand this we have misunderstood the Gospel and there will be no urgency to our evangelism.

In Christ we are ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, lifted out of the realms of death and given life.

This is always the Church's message, her Evangel. We are sinners in desperate need of salvation. The Good News is that God has anticipated our plight in sending Jesus as our Saviour. All we have to do is repent of our sins, receive Him into our hearts and seek to follow Him.

No wonder the Church gives us Advent, the time of hope, of longing, of knowing ourselves, of confessing our sins, of recommitting ourselves to Christ and looking forward, with great excitement, to His coming, in history and to His coming in glory.