



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter-Year C-April 28<sup>th</sup> 2019

***Readings: Acts 5: 12-16, Psalm 117, Apocalypse 1: 9-13, 17-19,  
John 20: 19-31***

As I got back from Lourdes in the early hours of this morning and got to bed at 4am these are essentially the thoughts of a tired pilgrim.

First the good news. All your intentions were prayed for at the masses and the holy places.

Second, it was the hardest week I have known in Lourdes. We had some very loveable children and some very difficult children to care for.

Sometimes they were the same children.

We also had a very young care team taking on extraordinary responsibilities. I am very happy to tell you that our youngest representative was described by the West Country group leader as 'a remarkable young man of exceptional intelligence and compassion whose care of his charges was exemplary and astonishing in one so young'.

Thirdly, I have been preaching every day in an intense atmosphere so must beg your pardon if what follows doesn't match up to the usual full portion.

We have been working and worshipping in the season of the Resurrection. On the first day of our journeying a delightful and utterly

committed helper, from another parish, came to me and told me that he had ceased to believe in the Faith, stopped praying and now believed in reincarnation.

At the first opportunity in his limited free time we sat down and I explained to him what he thought he believed in. Reincarnation, based on the doctrine of karma, posits a grace free future in which you become what you deserve – something continuous but wholly other – you may, according to performance, ascend to royalty or be relegated to a crustacean. It is a mechanistic meritocracy with no room for mercy. This is the antithesis of the Gospel and a denial of the sovereignty of God. More personally and particularly it is a direct assault on the integrity of the person. To me it is plain nonsense that I could have been Queen Cleopatra and could now occupy my present exalted position from the transmigration of the soul of a peculiarly ethical road kill badger. The young man was intrigued but not convinced. We both bolted our coffees and returned to work.

Today's Gospel, the summit and climax of John's account of the Resurrection, trumpets the Christian claim of continuity and integrity of person beyond the gates of death. In Christ's Resurrection the whole person is raised up. Thomas is, in the face of his incredulity, invited by the Risen Christ to place his fingers into the very wounds that tell us of the crucified now risen. They are continuous, one and the same, and the marks of Calvary are to be found still on the miracle of the third day. He is not another. He is not mere spirit. He is the whole identifiable humanity raised in glory- continuous but transformed. He is the fulfilment of the prophetic revelation of the Transfiguration. This historical and attested fact of our Faith could not be more different from all the other philosophical theories from the pantheon of paganism. There, for four days, the matter rested.

On the Friday breakfast the young man came to me in great excitement. After a week of Mass and teaching, the young man had been invited join a couple of other helpers, before dawn and the children's awake, in praying the old route of the Stations of the Cross. Suddenly, he reported, as they arrived at the Calvary station, he understood. No....more than understood. He sensed the reality of God. The veil between heaven and earth was very thin. He found himself able to pray again after months of barrenness and indifference and fading, failing faith. Not just able to pray but wanting to. He was ridiculously excited.....no, it was not ridiculous at all but reminiscent of the Psalmist who, encountering God's mercy, describes his mouth as 'filled with laughter'. He wanted to tell everybody.

What brought about this transformation? Was it the barrage of a week of Father's finest erudition? Was it the simple invitation of respected friends to join them in an ancient devotion? It is often part of the foundation of teaching and simple manageable evangelism that brings people home. But it is also something more. It is the miracle of pilgrimage as our own recent pilgrims to the Holy Land have attested. Away from the all-consuming commitments of daily life, we walk the holy places where the saints have trod – and accompany us still. There, with Thomas, we can reach out to touch the Lord and ask Him to touch us. Is it really you, Lord? And He answers. No wonder the young man was excited – and so were we. This was no great healing, tested and recorded in the forensic annals of Lourdes. Nonetheless it was one of the many millions of little miracles in which this place abounds and why we joyfully send our young people to serve there each Eastertide. Together we continue to teach and preach and invite to the places of encounter. But the work is the Lord's. Halleluiah.

Amen

2018 Fowey Retreat