



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Corpus Christi-Year C-June 23rd 2019

Readings: Genesis 14: 18-20, Psalm 109, 1 Corinthians 11: 23-36, Luke 9: 11-17

Today, in our parish church, all the long months of preparation and prayer will lead our children to their first Holy Communion. Parental panics over frocks, suits, cakes and flowers will melt into the background as their children approach this extraordinary moment – a day that they will remember all their lives.

The preparations, I note, are very little different from those that recipients of royal honours go through before their trip to the Palace to receive a gong from the Queen. The difference is that what we do today is no ordinary honour, the award of no ordinary kingdom. We approach the throne of no ordinary or secular monarch of a limited jurisdiction and empire. We kneel before no mortal king. We are entering no palace that will, one day, crumble into dust like Halicarnassos or Babylon.

Today our children will present themselves at the palace of the King of Kings. They will be welcomed and invited, by His mysterious grace, into Forever. They will receive the gift of His Presence and take that eternal and transformative reality into the very depths of their being. They are participating in the miracle of salvation and committing themselves to a pilgrimage that will, long years hence on their deathbed, grant them that

entry into the uplands of the purification and the longed-for vision of the light of His Presence.

Sadly we know that, statistically, a year from now many of those children and their parents will have lapsed or relapsed. Laziness, indifference, the pressures of work, culture, secular hostility will all take their toll.

How can we go from such great joy and remembrance and good intention to this sorry state?

There are, it seems to me, still two fundamental responses to the glorious activity of God in our lives.

One is evinced by the good folk of Gadara. You will recall the Gadarene demoniac, terrifying, outcast, railing in the desert places, whose demons Jesus sends into a herd of pigs and consequent destruction. Were the people of Gadara grateful for Jesus' intervention? For His solving of this terrible problem and local danger?

They may well have been, but their response was very telling. The Bible tells us that they 'besought Him to depart'. Please go away. We have seen your terrifying power but we like keeping pigs and we don't want you interfering in our lives. You've done what you came for now please leave us alone. We like being disobedient, unclean, unchanged. We don't need you and all your demands in our life. Thank you and Goodbye.

The second response is that of Peter. Challenged by the really difficult teaching of Jesus about the Body and Blood of the Mass and the Real Presence, we are told that many former followers walked away from Jesus. Jesus then asks the rest if they are going to leave Him now that the going has got tough.

Peter replies for them all: 'Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'

He will be Jesus' companion for life – even when he fails Jesus. There is no turning back. We accept the strange and sometimes difficult path of the pilgrim journey. We accept, with trepidation, the part of that journey that passes through the Calvary. Our eyes are fixed on the Third Day. Our

eyes are fixed on the Promise of the Presence. We know that wherever the eternal flame flickers in the sanctuary, there Christ is truly present. We know that, approaching the altar of grace, shriven of our sins, we will receive the Viaticum, the food for the journey, the ingestion of the divine life of Christ.

Every day, like many of you, I take a rattlebag of tablets to keep me going. In spite of all this, like you, I know that I will deteriorate, degenerate and die. There is no medicine that can humanly save us. But in the Mass we are vouchsafed what St. Irenaeus calls 'the Medicine of immortality'. Herein is the secret of eternity. As St. Paul says, 'Christ in me, the hope of glory.'

The Divine life has condescended to dwell in Man and through the Sacrament of the Mass, to dwell in you and me. Herein is the final cure for my mortality, the place of reconciliation of my fallen humanity with His sovereign divinity. Here my little gift of time is transformed into His eternity. This is the gift that lasts forever.

If we are to keep our children, if we are to keep our people, this is the glorious vision we must recapture and, by our conviction and demeanour and telling, inflame anew the holy fire on the altar of our hearts and receive with joy the Holy One of God