



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year C-September 15th 2019

**Readings: Exodus 32: 7-11. 13-14, Psalm 50, 1 Timothy 1: 12-17,
Luke 15: 1-32**

Exodus – an outbreak of Mad Cow Disease.

(NB. Lest the reader think that the author has flipped or inadvertently ingested the wrong sort of mushroom, this was written on the steps up from the Mithraeum that lies below the wonderful Basilica of San Clemente – my favourite church in Rome. It is dedicated to the lovely Alessandra, who looks after me each year and prepares the altar for my offering of Mass there and for Sr. Serenella who, unseen, takes my booking and faithfully checks my celebret to make sure I'm still kosher. She may not after this.)

'I was down at the Mithraeum with a few of the lads on Saturday night. A couple of flasks to the good of the Club's excellent Vino Rosso. Mithraeum – let me explain. It's a men's club – solidarity and all that – mainly armed services, a bit raucous etc. A bit of non-specific religion thrown in to dignify the ritual. Kind of like your freemasons but a bit livelier. Instead of rolling up your trousers and making blood-curdling promises while hopping about on a chessboard, we get 'down and dirty' – new initiates especially.

Before you can ascend to our elite banqueting suite there is the not inconsiderable matter of the 'baptism of blood' – literally.

The new boy is laid down in the great pit just a couple of feet below the surface. A great grille is placed over him and the necessary drainage channel. Enter the bull, snorting and bellowing to the wild cheers of our members. Il Toro is not a happy chap and he is 'giving it large'. He'd be even less happy if he knew what was going to happen next. Our laddo in the pit is trying to look brave, while grateful for the drainage channel, as several tons of infuriated testosterone thunders inches above his twitching body.

When full pleasure has been exhausted from this wild and loin loosening spectacle, the one called upon to play the god Mithras steps forward. He leaps the tethered 'crazy', the reservoir of divine ecstatic power, and, with one swift movement of the knife, slits the great neck from ear to ear. The dying raging beast's blood drenches the quaking initiate, along with everything else that the dying let go in the last frenzy. A perfect symbol of life as it is in the regular army.

The ritual complete, the carcass dragged offstage, the stinking, blood bedraggled initiate is roared into the club and to his banqueting couch. (Some lodges have a shower at this point – not us. The blood of the bull and our manhood bind us together.) Cheers, gentlemen.

Of course, Bull worship is nothing new. (Just look how seriously you take the commentators on your Radio and Television).

The Egyptians were at it millennia ago. Apis – the Bull god- the reborn sacrifice, the intermediary between the gods and men. He had the ancient 'cross and loop' sign of eternal life too.

And no Minoan funeral on ancient Crete would have been complete without a good transfusion from the life force of a bull onto the bloodless boxed up 'stiff'.

Then there was that shenanigans in the desert, you were just reading about, when a lot of stateless riff-raff cooked up a golden calf god in their

leader's absence and got into orgiastic religion. (We are talking Saturday night at the boys' club here – bring on the dancing girls)

Apparently, on his return, the chief was not impressed. Went ballistic. Shut down the whole show. Told them they had been saved by the blood of a 'sacrificed lamb'! Credulous or what?

Apparently, much later on, a subsequent cult thought they had a God-Man who was also a Lamb whose blood defeated the Angel of Death. (My head's starting to spin). This Lamb was sacrificed on a Cross – like the eternal life symbol (that bit makes sense). But the Lamb was also a shepherd and rescuer of souls (I'm losing it again). He was a key to peace and justice and reconciliation with the ONLY GOD. Where's the fun in that?

No riotous assembly

No heavy boozing

No ecstatic etceteras

No blood on the carpet

No testosterone-fuelled Saturday nights

I can't see it catching on, can you? Bull worship will be going on long after this namby-pamby Lamb nonsense is forgotten.

See you down at the Mithraeum tonight?

Or perhaps, all things considered, you'd rather stay on for Mass?

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis.

(My thanks to Moses and to San Clemente for regularly reminding me of the difference.)

2019 Fowey Retreat