



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year A-January 19th 2020

***Readings: Isaiah 49: 3. 5-6, Psalm 39, 1 Corinthians 1:1-3,
John 1: 29-34***

The Mass is THE great act of remembrance.

The Mass is the recapitulation of history in the present.

The Mass is the coming together of everything in the 'Eternal NOW' of God.

The Mass centres around the pivotal moment of the Sacrifice of the Calvary and the Miracle of the Third Day.

The Mass is the mystery that translates our time into eternity and presences the Eternal in our Time.

It is worth remembering then that, every time the priest goes to the altar, to celebrate with his people, God's people, the Mystery of the Mass, he quotes John the Baptist – and not just anywhere or incidentally.

At the climax of the celebration, the praise offered, the penance done, the Word heard, the affirmations of faith proclaimed, the intentions prayed, the offerings made, the thanksgivings sung, the Ghost invoked to transform the gifts, the Calvary revisited, the Risen Life proclaimed – at the critical moment of revelation, at the liturgical mountaintop, the Presence revealed, the priest speaks these words:

'Behold the Lamb of God' –Ecce Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi
Beati qui ad cenam Agni vocati sunt – Blessed are those called to the

supper of the Lamb'

And we respond simply, 'Domine. Non sum dignus' – Lord I am not worthy.

In that simple proclamation, 'Behold the Lamb of God...' time conflates into the divine unity of the Presence and the Present and the great history of salvation becomes coherent as we see the cosmic co-inherence of it all. Behind this complexity of language and idea is a simple but stunning reality. As the priest, the alter Christus, elevates this little circle of unleavened – now become the One who came out of the House of Bread (Bethlehem) - as the priest elevates – this living sign of our sustenance and our salvation – now become bread for the life of the world, the centuries roll away and the curtain of history is drawn back to reveal the eternal moment exposed in time.

We kneel before the altar of God in Bodmin or wherever Mass is offered. But we are also on the Jordan bank, hearing the words of John, pointing to Jesus, encouraging us to see who He really is and to follow Him. And in those words we are also back in Egypt, slaves of sin and death, waiting on the last miracle, waiting for the Passing over, waiting for liberty and life - our houses and homes protected by the blood of the sacrificed Lamb badged on our doorposts, the sacramental sign of God which will turn away the Angel of Death. Behold the Lamb – Behold the sacrifice that saves us.

In those words we go back further yet into the agonising three day journey of Abraham to Mount Moriah. The call of God to sacrifice Isaac, the, precious gift, the hope of the future, all given, all now to be returned. And there in the moment of supreme surrender to the apparent tyranny of God's love, the sacrifice is provided, the ram caught in the thicket. There, on Mount Moriah, God spares the Son of Man. There, millennia later, on that self-same hill, which is The Calvary, Man will not spare the Son of God. Behold the Lamb of God.

And fast forward to that moment of revelation on Mount Tabor when the chosen three, Peter, James and John, ascend with Jesus to witness the Transfiguration and the blinding light that will illuminate both the mountaintop and all time. We kneel before the revelation of Heaven in the presence of the Eternal One, the Pre-existent Word, flanked by Moses and Elijah, the witnesses of that same Word in Law and Prophecy as they confer. The Gospel tells us they speak of the new Exodus. That new Exodus is the way of salvation which is now before Christ on the Road to Jerusalem and the Via Dolorosa and the Calvary Hill. It is more than the road to the Promised Land. It is the final and eternal Passover that will lead Man back through the Gates of Death, back from the exile and into the Paradise so long lost. It is, for Man, the way out and the way home. All this co-inheres, is present at once, in this one moment of the Mass, in this one phrase from Holy Scripture. As the thin disc of transformed bread, transubstantiated matter, transfigured re-presentation is raised for acknowledgement and adoration, we are in the Presence. The priest exhorts you to ‘Behold’ – but sometimes that radiance and proximity of the unwavering light means that the God-bearer himself must close his eyes and wait for the revelation of the overwhelming glory of the divine to pass before he and his people consume and are consumed by God. ‘BEHOLD, THE LAMB OF GOD’.

In penal times Catholics would often carry a little disc of wax embossed with the sign of the Agnus Dei. It was an eloquent statement of the supreme mystery of the forbidden Mass and enough to fatally convict them of belief in a higher power than the religion of the State. As Catholics we are called to own that conviction and to carry Him still. (I will be holding a little box at the door afterwards containing just such an Agnus for those who have never seen one).