



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

The Baptism of the Lord-Year A-January 12th 2020

Readings: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7, Psalm 28, Acts 10: 34-38,

Matthew 3: 13-17

In this great act of remembrance, the recapitulation of history in the present, the coming together of everything in the ‘Eternal NOW’ of God, it is worth remembering 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.

At the apogee 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 apogee, 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, ‘*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) to become the bread for the life of the world, the centuries roll away, 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 we come to pray. 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.

And further back still we go as the agonising three day journey of Abraham to Mount Moriah unfolds. 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 the Calvary (which is the self-same hill) 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. To stand before the revelation of Heaven and be 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 discuss the new Exodus. That new Exodus 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. 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