



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Easter Sunday Mass-April 12<sup>th</sup> 2020

***Readings: Acts 10: 34. 37-43, Psalm 117, Colossians 3: 1-4,  
John 20: 1-9***

For most of my lifetime, which is now the full biblical allowance, the great Christian festivals have, in the largely decadent culture of the West, atrophied into self-congratulatory banalities.

The Nativity of Our Lord – an excuse for an extended shopping-fest.

The Resurrection – a Bank Holiday garlanded with the fecundity of Easter Bunnies and the largely submerged pagan symbolism of the EGG, its fertility suffocated in chocolate.

So it seems strange to be celebrating the Paschal Mysteries, the life, death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in a time of such extraordinary intensity and, to be blunt, so much dying.

The last time I can remember our people gathering round the telly every evening to hear the death toll was in the Falklands War – and that was far away and involving our military. The home front was never in danger.

For all our sorrow, death did not stalk the streets of our capital city. We were concerned for other people's mortality rather than our own.

The last thing that any of us thought we would be doing this year is celebrating the central mystery of our Faith behind closed doors, fearful and deprived of the Presence – though on reflection and for different reasons that is pretty much the experience of the first Easter. Nor, of

course, could we have anticipated us doing so in a time of Plague. That is a term from the history books.

How much we have forgotten.

Because the origin of the Sacrifice of Christ and the liberation of the faithful from sin and death lie in the Passover. It is this great celebration that forms both the backdrop and the content of the mystery of the Mass and the Messianic message of the gift of immortality in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

And the Passover has nothing to do with Easter Bunnies or chocolate eggs.

The Pass Over is the end of a long series of events, punishments on a disobedient society, culminating in a terrifying slaughter.

The events were plagues.

The great pagan power of Egypt had consistently and persistently refused to listen to the one true God. It had mistaken its might for truth. It had undermined its future by the widespread use of contraception and then panicked because the 'immigrant community' – the Hebrews – were outbreeding the natives. The order went out to slaughter any new-born Hebrew boys (girls could be used to breed by native Egyptians). The cull of the 'enemy' in the midst was on.

A generation later when that famous survivor, Moses, took centre stage the persecution and enslavement of the people continued.

The Pharaoh refused to listen to the words of God and there ensued a mighty contest between the gods of Egypt and the Almighty. At each stage God Himself intervened with a plague that overthrew one of the pantheon of the Egyptian gods. At each stage Pharaoh reeled but did not repent.

The final plague was most terrible of all. Remembering the merciless heart for the slaughter of the Hebrew children, God prepared the Pass Over – the final plague. The Angel of Death would Pass Over the land and all those not badged with the Blood of the Sacrificed Lamb would

experience the unspeakable horror – the death of the first born – the ultimate tearing of the heart and the symbolic destruction of the future. The Passover is the final plague. So it is perhaps not strange that we should celebrate it in the midst of so much dying. Nor should we be surprised if the Lord has finally lost patience with a world that has been slaughtering the innocent for decades. Nor is this particular plague a respecter of faith or integrity. But it is a reminder to set our sights on the meaning of the Mass and the promise of the Blood of the Lamb. The Blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, marked on the doorposts of our heart and on the lintel of our mind, turns away the Angel of Eternal Death and ushers the faithful into the journey to the Land of Promise, the Paradise of God.

What we celebrate in Christ is liberation and the gift of life eternal in the Presence of God.

The Blood of the Lamb is not a cure for Covid 19 but it is the remedy for our mortality. In Christ the dead shall live. Hallelujah