



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

6th Sunday of Easter-Year A-May 17th 2020

Readings: Acts 8: 5-8. 14-17, Psalm 65, 1 Peter 3: 15-18,

John 14: 15-21

‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments.’

I have a confession to make, though I’m not sure if it’s a sin.

I enjoy watching the TV programme, ‘Say Yes to the Dress’.

For those who have no idea what I’m talking about it’s a show which follows brides-to-be and their family entourage on their outing to get THE wedding dress of their dreams. The dresses are, for me anyway, essentially a sideshow to observing the family dynamic. Some brides confuse a wedding dress with night attire for the honeymoon. Some mothers forget whose day it is and try to relive their own moment. Some siblings are clearly jealous etc etc but for the most part it is a well intentioned chaos ably guided by the resident couturier – the shows set in Atlanta and Georgia are the best – to enable the excited candidate to feel that emotional moment of ‘brideship’ and be utterly confident in her own self and possibility of her inner beauty being outwardly revealed.

A couple of weeks ago I witnessed a car crash of a bridal appointment.

The bride, a quiet, unassuming and beautiful girl was constantly outflanked by her ghastly mother – who, truth to tell, wanted to be the dress wearer herself. The mother, one of those predatory women,

physically a cross between Cruella de Ville and a whinnying horse, was the kind of woman that, if she came in the bedroom, would see the most enthusiastic adulterer fling open the window and head for the fire escape. The demure daughter duly appeared in a beautiful and tasteful gown. Everyone loved it. Camera on mother.....her face twitched.

‘What do you think, Mom?’

(None of these girls/women will buy without the maternal approval).

Mother savoured the moment of limelight. Her lips curled as she snarled, ‘It makes you look like a virgin.

If that’s really the look you want, you got the dress for it.’

As the store-owner acidly observed,

‘What does this woman want her daughter to look like?’

It was a truly shocking moment because in one simple, crushing, throwaway, wounding line, the old horse encapsulated utter contempt for virtue, continence and fidelity. Her sneering dismissal of her daughter’s desire to present herself to her fiance as a promise of intended unique, wholesome and beautiful commitment within the marriage bond sounded to me like the final and unedifying epitaph to the chaos unleashed by the sexual revolution of my youth.

Why do I mention this in some detail? Well, the problem for us in serving Christ is also essentially one of love and commitment. None of us can present ourselves at the altar as the spotless bride of Christ and yet, as the Church, that is what we are intended to be. Jesus Himself tells us, in today’s Gospel, that..... if we love Him we will keep His commandments. And, if I may suggest, the best way for a man to keep His commandments is to LOVE them. In my experience it is usually observable that a man (or a woman for that matter) will ALWAYS find time and energy to do what they love doing. So, first and foremost, we have to learn to love the things of God. It makes obeying them a whole lot easier!

The difficulty for the Christian, in today's debased Western culture, is that it has long been unfashionable to love the things of God. In art and architecture, beauty has been usurped by brutalism and inhumanism. In literature there is a fashionable contempt for the heroic. In much natural science there is a detachment from origins and first cause and a reductionism to the purely material. In law and mores there is a severing of the bond between reason and revelation leaving the door open to a demonic departure into synthetic emotionalism and the triumph of the destructive lobby group.

What we have failed to do – my generation above all – is to convey to our children and grandchildren, the glorious beauty of virtue, the deep and lasting attractiveness of the option of life that is at the heart of the Gospel. We have too often, mistaking tolerance for love, collaborated with the prevailing culture believing, mistakenly, that in so doing we would be taken seriously. We would be thought 'normal' and not be ridiculed for our 'old fashioned views' – forgetting that these are, in fact, timeless truths.

We have, in the time left to us, to re-educate ourselves in the love of the beauty of His commandments. When we come to present ourselves to Him at the altar, time and sin have ensured that we cannot present ourselves as virgins. That ship sailed a long time ago. But we can still wear the white dress **ONLY BECAUSE** we have been washed in His precious blood. We can embrace virtue. We can honour continence. We can rejoice in the freedom of faithfulness. We can set our course for the harbour of reconciliation and peace. We can learn again the deep resonating truths of the Gospel and come to love His commandments – to love Him.

Jesus seeks to clothe us in the beauty of holiness. That is why He died for us. He wants us to appear at the altar as the Church, the Bride of Christ, for that is who we are. Redeemed sinners.

Do we want to be faithful, virtuous, continent, faithful, loving, utterly and

uniquely committed, lifelong, eternity long, lovers of Our Lord and His joyful and liberating commandments?

Do we want to be radical lovers of the beauty of His truth?

Do we want to walk back down the aisle on His arm and into the unending future wrapped in His unfailing love? Our garments washed white in His blood?

In the words of the show host, 'Are we saying 'YES' to the dress?'