



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year A-September 20th 2020

Readings: Isaiah 55: 6-9, Psalm 144, Philippians 1: 20-24. 27

Matthew 20: 1-16

‘I want to be gone and be with Christ which would be better.’ St Paul
When my mother was eight years old she was diagnosed as mortally ill.
Her father, a stickler for the truth, said that she must be told. He took that
task upon himself and my mother prepared herself for what, as it turned
out, would not happen for another 80 years. All life would now be in the
frame and context of that shocking childhood revelation.

Earlier this year a very dear friend of ours – a co-belligerent for the Faith,
a fellow convert and a man of much love, wit and laughter, a gentle
pastor and a razor sharp theological mind, died. He knew it was coming
and was prepared. One of the last things he said to us was, ‘I love this
life. I shall miss it.’

Both of these much loved fellow pilgrims knew how to discuss the
reality.

For most of us, no matter how fierce our loyalty to the Faith, there is a
fear of dying (though not, I hope, of death). We cling to life. Our bodies
resist the mortal end with all their remaining power. Those who gather at
the bedside, be that physically or by the miracle and ubiquity of prayer,
find ourselves chasing God for a reprieve. Too often our enthusiasm for
mortal survival inhibits that necessary discussion and spiritual preparation

that each of us must undergo. This is not helpful to the dying. In my days of hospital chaplaincy I often found that I was caught in a game of 'Hide and Seek'. The dying and their loved ones fearing to acknowledge the reality, out of concern for one another, and therefore avoiding the essential final briefing of love and prayer and encouragement.

St. Paul, of course, does not beat about the bush. He would be glad to be gone. He would love to be with Christ. He has undergone prison, beatings, exile, shipwreck, mobbing, rejection etc etc.

He looks forward to Heaven with great enthusiasm.

We need to capture some of St. Paul's enthusiasm for Heaven.

On a fine day, with the westering sun going down over my native Fowey harbour or in the dawn light as the mist bathes the river valley from my bedroom window in Lostwithiel, I find myself saying.

'Heaven will have to go some to beat this.' But I know it will. The prospect beyond this mortal pale for the Faithful is unimaginable glory and beauty and indescribable transcendence. We will be in the Presence not just of the natural beauty of this world but the supernatural beauty of its origin and end. Wow!

So then, there are always people, like Paul, with whom one can dispense with circumlocution and talk divine reality. Visiting another old friend last year – her family, believers but distressed by her approaching death – we sat in her study. I leant forward conspiratorially and said, 'I can't say this in front of your family but I bet you are really excited aren't you?'

A great servant of God, her face wreathed in smiles, she said,

'You know, I really am.'

Freed by the truth we then talked spiritual and eternal realities and prayed accordingly.

It is always a joy for a priest to be able to have that conversation with a soul in transit. We have much to do, much to prepare, much to give thanks for, much to receive and the privilege of sharing in that final part of the journey home. Our hearts are taught by longing to seek Christ here

and to seek Christ eternally. While we are here, we seek to serve Him and bring others closer. Like St. Paul, both in our living and in our dying, we preach Christ crucified, risen, ascended and glorified. Our days marked out by a longing to be with Him for ever.

As the sun goes down over our beloved harbour of our many voyagings and the dawn rays disperse the mist from the river valley of home, we are prepared for the shimmering beauty of the glory that will greet us and the cleansing fire of the love that will embrace us and lead us onward into the Eternal Presence.

Spiritual Exercise:

Have conversation with children and friends who will be there about your faith and needful preparations.

Write your letter to them outlining what you want them to do when you are approaching the transit.

Get them to commit to offering Mass for your soul three times a year.

It is a good form of evangelism when you are no longer here.