



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

2nd Sunday of Advent-Year B-December 6th 2020

Readings: Isaiah 40: 1-5. 9-11, Psalm 84, 2 Peter 3: 8-14,

Mark 1: 1-8

I was listening to the Today programme a week or so ago when up pitched the Thought for the Day slot with Rabbi Laura Janner –Klausner, until recently head girl of Reform Judaism. She began with the usual litany about racism, sexism, transphobia etc and I was about to go into ‘sleep mode’ when she mentioned ‘Cancel Culture’. This is the new form of censorship and scapegoating where you look for something an opponent has said that may, even marginally, be interpreted as transgressing the latest cultural ‘philosophical and political’ norms and hound them, via the ruthless tool of social media, from the public square, condemn them as pariahs and often make them thenceforth unemployable.

It is the new puritanism in its dangerous and vicious pomp.

She rightly said that people who cause suffering should be held to account BUT that everyone made mistakes and we should accept apologies and offer forgiveness and not silence those who want to ask questions. Again AMEN.

Just when I thought we were, unusually, home and dry and in full accord she added this: She had been back to Jerusalem and overlooking the Valley of Hinnom/ Gehenna/Hell. It was the place where human and

particularly child sacrifice took place whenever Israel reverted to paganism. ‘Thousands of years ago’ she said, the Prophet Jeremiah, ‘who might have approved of Cancel Culture’, stood there and smashed a clay pot ‘in revulsion at the people’s abhorrent behaviour’.

He did this, the lovely Laura told us, because of ‘his total belief in his own truth as the divine voice speaking through him’.

She hoped that we would never smash jars – a sign of irreversible fragmentation – but rather ‘vaccinate’ ourselves against ‘unquestioning dogma and toxicity’.

Oh, dear.

In one fell swoop Rabbi Laura demolishes the concept of objective truth (we’re back with the old relativist lie of ‘your truth and my truth’).

She also disposes of the myth that somehow the Prophets (who might have been supposed to be proclaimers of God’s Word) were inspired - when in fact they were clearly simply misguided bigots.

Furthermore, poor old Jeremiah is aligned with the forces of darkness that want to suppress free speech.

A few facts.

The relativist lie – your truth and my truth might sit fine and comfy in Islington dinner parties but not so pretty when you have to say that, if this is correct, then Hitler’s ‘truth’ and ‘Stalin’s truth’ and the truth of the child sacrificing followers of Moloch are as valid as the Faith or indeed any manifestation of human compassion, justice or mercy. Not for me, sister.

In order to go down Rabbi Laura’s path of dismissal of Jeremiah you have to be ignorant of the facts – which she, I must assume, is not.

Jeremiah never wanted to be a prophet. He hated having to admonish the people. He tried to resign umpteen times. Nor was he able to impose a cancellation or censorship on those who opposed him. The opposers were the establishment. It was them who imprisoned him, tried to kill him and flung him down a well. Jeremiah wasn’t giving ‘his belief in his own

truth' and mistaking it for 'the divine voice speaking through him'. If he was then Rabbi Laura needs to go the whole hog and admit that her version of Judaism is not Judaism at all but a Scripture-lite accommodation with the culture.

Under her schema all the prophets would need to be edited out - period. And, she went on in an outbreak of even more profound topicality, we needed to '*vaccinate* ourselves against dogma'?

Dogma means teaching. It is not a potentially mortal sickness or plague. Do we really want our people to be ignorant of the Faith and helplessly vulnerable to the moral idiocies of the culture?

Today our Gospel introduces the last of the Prophets, John the Baptist. Like Jeremiah, and all the others before him, he calls on the people to repent and turn back to God. (Later on, of course, John – again like Jeremiah - will become a victim of the Cancel Culture, silenced, locked up and murdered for telling the unpalatable truth to a corrupt establishment). Jeremiah stood over the valley where the pagan rites of child sacrifice were carried out and warned of the fall of the nation – shattered like this clay pot. He wasn't making it up. That is exactly what happened. Jerusalem besieged, destroyed, its inhabitants exiled.

John the Baptist calls the people back. Their failure will result in the next great fall of Jerusalem and the longest exile in the history of Man.

The task of the Church, the agent of evangelisation, the preparer for the way of Christ, the introducer of the Messiah, the Saviour, to the people is no different.

The Church has to call the nation to repentance. If people don't know what sin is, how can they repent?

If people do not understand salvation – being saved from what? – why would they seek a Saviour?

If people think, with Rabbi Laura, that a proclamation of God's Word and call to repentance is the unpleasant terrain of those infected with the

toxicity of faith teaching and a mistaking of their own prejudice for divine truth, why would they listen?

Only because, as Mark's Gospel begins today, this road, through repentance, forgiveness and renewal is but the beginning of the very, very GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Saviour and the start of the journey of these bags of fragile dust into the divine and into the forever.

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