



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

2nd Sunday of Lent-Year B-February 28th 2021

***Readings: Genesis 22: 1-2. 9-13. 15-18, Psalm 115, Romans: 8: 31-34,  
Mark 9: 2-10***

I am, at the best of times, no great fan of meetings. Some people love them, delight in their endless agendas and carry forensic knowledge of standing orders and important minutiae which act as a barrier to getting anything serious done.

One of my joys on becoming a Catholic priest was to find that Deanery meetings, a quiet foretaste of Hell in my Anglican incarnation and a scarcely disguised gathering of armed camps, were a time of genuine cheer where everybody was glad to see one another, confect some serious business and have a good lunch.

As with so many other things the Chinese Flu has done for much of the joy. A meeting that is virtual is better than none, but it still does not come close to reality. Engagement is limited by appearance and the mastery of mute buttons and techie whizzes out of the grasp of most elderly priests.

Worse still is virtual lunch! Gone the table fellowship, the excellent cooking of our host churches and the intimacy of a brief time of common worship in the midday office.

So it was with some trepidation that I clicked on to the most recent episode of our common life. The speaker, whom I both know and like,

was DR. Caroline Farey – an extremely bright and enthusiastic academic whose teaching sessions are hugely accessible. Her task was to introduce us to the new Directory of Catechetics, a universal guide issued by the Vatican and which she helped research and write.

The sessions were on Catechetics and Evangelisation. The Church likes using long words to obscure the simple facts so, to translate:  
Catechetics – Learning about Jesus. Evangelisation –Telling people about Jesus.

There are other words which need translation too. I recall when I became a Catholic, a well-meaning chap asked me if the priest had introduced me to Mr. Godgy? I was pretty sure I hadn't met him. It turned out that Mistagogy is the subsequent process of initiating the newbug into the deeper things of the Faith. Further education in short.

Dr. Caroline who is Tigger to my Eeyore had the unenviable task of geeing up a group of clergy in these matters. Never an easy task, even in better times.

One of the things she mentioned was that some of our difficulty in Evangelisation, sorry – telling people about Jesus – is that there is a recent history of less than sublime ignorance of Salvation History.

Put briefly – if we are telling people that Jesus is the answer, it is important for both them and us to know what the question is. If we don't know our history, primarily Scriptural, we'll be facing some fast bowling with a broken bat.

What does this mean? For example, to talk of salvation today in England would raise the obvious question from the non-believer.

'Salvation from what?' If they have no concept of the Fall of Man and the Human condition and the option to accept or refuse a relationship with God, why would they even be interested in this antiquated institution?

If they have no knowledge of the raising up of Abraham as a foundational figure of Faith, how would they begin to understand the interrelation and differences in the three monotheistic Abrahamic Faiths?

If they know nothing of the Mosaic Covenant how would they begin to comprehend the foundational nature of the Commandments in the development of Judeo-Christian culture and the ethical basis of our civilisation?

If they don't get the Passover how are they ever going to get the Mass?

If they don't know this morning's account of the near sacrifice of Isaac, how will they begin to comprehend the Calvary?

If they don't know the radiance of Moses after his encounters with the Almighty, what would they make of the Transfiguration?

And so on...

The depth of our Faith is that it is all there in Salvation History. The full revelation of Christ is prefigured at every turn in the Old Testament.

So today's readings depend, for our understanding, on their relation to one another and their complementary place in the history of our Faith and our Family, God's family.

Abram goes to sacrifice Isaac in obedience to the command of God. It is a supreme test of his loyalty. The child who gave Abram and Sara a future, upon whom hang all the promises of God, is to be killed. Crazy.

But in the pagan world child sacrifice was a normal practice.

So is Abram as obedient as the pagans?

He is BUT God does not want that killing.

He wants the total sacrifice of the heart. Having proved Abram, God provides a ram caught in a thicket for the sacrifice.

What on earth has this bizarre world of ancient near eastern religious extremism got to do with Jesus? Got to do with us?

Well, Abram is chosen by God for a new beginning in the history of Man. His people are chosen, the heirs of Abram are chosen. We are those heirs. The son, the ONLY son, carries the wood on which he is to be sacrificed to the hill of Mount Moriah.

God's only Son, Jesus, carries the wood on which He is to be sacrificed to..... wait for it - MOUNT MORIAH, now known as Calvary.

In the place where God spared the Son of Man, Abram's son, our ancestor, MAN did not spare the Son of God. That sacrifice is essential for our salvation.

When Christ is transfigured on the Mountain, Moses and Elijah appear beside Him. They represent the Law and the Prophets. They point to Christ. They discuss the new Exodus, the new Passover, which will, by the blood of the Lamb save men from the Angel of Death.

This is a lightning tour of headlines from two brief glimpses of the divine. If we are ignorant of our salvation history, our comprehension of the enormity of what God has done, is pretty thin.

And it doesn't end there,,,,,though for your sakes today it must.

Volume II is the history of the Church beginning at the Acts of the Apostles. And our history is part of it for you and I are but the latest chapter in those Acts. Our testimony and lives continue the witness. We are part of the great mystery. We need to be able to decode that mystery for others. We need to be able to join the dots.

If we know it, we can share it. As we share it we want to know more and, in turn, this strengthens our faith and thus the process builds itself.

We become closer to Jesus, know Him more deeply and long to share Him with others more urgently.

As we catechise, we are catechised. As we evangelise, we are evangelised.