



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year B-September 5<sup>th</sup> 2021

***Readings: Isaiah 35: 4-7, Psalm 145, James 2: 1-5, Mark 7: 31-37.***

5th Sunday Preface

'Almighty and eternal God, You laid the foundations of the world and have arranged the changing of the times and seasons. You formed Man in your own image and set humanity over the whole world in all its wonder, *to rule in your name* over all you have made and forever praise you in your mighty works, through Christ Our Lord...'

In the brief tenure of humanity of this planet earth, our island home, there have been more than a fair share of alarms and threats of disaster. As we try to adjust to Chinese Flu and its medical, social and political consequence, we may reflect on our recent ancestors' experience of staggering out of a world war in 1918 into the curse of the Spanish Lady, an epidemic that slaughtered more than the war itself. We may glance back to the even more disastrous plague of the 14th century which killed a third of Europe. And again its 17th century reprise. We may reflect upon the ceaseless wars of fallen man, murdering his fellow humans in colossal numbers. The development of armaments that, by the time of my birth saw a stand-off that was only halted (so far) by the doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD). If we were not all killed by the nuclear war itself we would surely perish in the subsequent

nuclear winter. Also there have been periods in the history of the earth when sudden (relatively speaking) climate change had made living conditions vastly less hospitable than the ones we enjoy.

Thus, when the first cries of alarm at the present unfolding crisis were heard it was, perhaps, unsurprising that the majority of people shrugged their shoulders and went about their daily business unconcerned. Now things have hotted up, literally, those who deny such apparent realities are rapidly being categorised alongside holocaust deniers as social pariahs. Typically, the Church has come late to the debate or so it appears.

Let me map out a bit of common ground. Anyone who gardens will tell you, whatever their politics, that the seasons are changing. Any viewer of the television news will be aware of natural disasters occurring at an apparently more frequent and devastating rate. Of course, we must set that against our modern ability to know such things because of the technology, things of which even our recent ancestors would have been unaware.

There is a consensus that, at least part of the troubles can be directly laid at our door – human beings are making a confounded mess which has consequences for all creation. Here, at least, the Church has always been ahead of the game. The Book of the Genesis tells us this – man has ‘messed up’ and the reason that we need a Gospel and a Saviour is embedded deep in the theology of the Fall. Man is not following the Maker’s instructions. On this, both secularists and believers can concur. This is both an individual and corporate problem.

But what are the Maker’s instructions?

The Book of the Genesis tells us several key things:

First we learnt Creation itself is a unique property of God. He is and was and always will be. He alone can create ex nihilo, from nothing, God the

first cause but uncaused Himself. Man makes or pro-creates, creates on behalf of God. Allowing us, made in the image of God, to pro-create, God gives to Man the pro- dominion of His creation. We govern on behalf of God. This is not a recipe for rapacious greed and terminal exploitation but rather a trusted stewardship.

To put it in country terms, we are the Land Agents of the Almighty. This has several implications.

- 1) We are not Masters of the Universe but servants of the Eternal One.
- 2) God refers to His creation as 'very good'. We must honour it no less.
- 3) Rapacious or greedy exploitation in response to our 'wants' rather than our 'needs' is not part of God's game plan.
- 4) No human economic system is a perfect match for God's intention. Unrestrained capitalism can be rapacious and demeaning. Nonetheless, bridled and directed by Christian ethics, it affords, thus far, the best hope of Man to provide, in his productive years, for his senility and unproductive closing chapters. It is no surprise that this system, rightly tempered, has offered historically the best hope of Man to avoid grinding poverty and economic misery.

Contrast this with the track record of Marxism – a wholly godless hymn to brutal materialism – and we find a track record of economic disaster, brutality, mass murder and famine. It is inconceivable that anyone in their right mind with any sense of history should subscribe to such discredited and destructive dogma.

There may yet be better ways than capitalism but we should be wary of embracing the moral idiocy of the materialists.

Our task is to steward creation.....it is also to have mercy on our fellow man. It is to operate on behalf of The Almighty in managing His 'very good' Creation. That is an awesome responsibility. We are responsible therein for the welfare of the Planet and our Fellow Man. No philosophy or religion has a better or more successful and sustainable approach to the gift of creation. If that means 'cleaning up our act' – so be it. If that means further tempering our systems in line with God's mandate of gift and grace and mercy – so be it.

The Book of the Genesis tells us that Man is granted 'Dominion'. That is not a licence for tyranny. Man acts on behalf of the 'DOMINUS' – the Lord. That is a tall order but one for which, come The Day, we will all be held to account.