



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year B-September 12th 2021

Readings: Isaiah 50: 5-9, Psalm 114, James 2: 14-18, Mark 8: 27-35.

There was an old evangelical saw that went: 'If you were taken to court charged with being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?' It's a good question. And there has been much in the Holy Scriptures this week that appertains to being hauled before the court. Earlier in the week St Paul, writing to those rascals at Corinth, goes ballistic when he discovers that members of the Church there have been taking each other before the pagan courts. Not only is this a terrible example of animosity and division in the Church but also a profound insult because some Christians are preferring the judgement of a non-believer to the justice of God. To compound this, even when they do their judicial process 'in house' as it were, the people chosen to dispense the justice leave a lot to be desired. 'How dare you?' rails the great evangelist. 'You should be ashamed of yourselves.' (1COR 6 v 1 – 11)

In today's reading from Isaiah, we see the picture of Christ before his judgement at the hands of men but we also see our own condition. If and when we are hauled to court in the time of persecution, we have the best possible 'brief'. Our Advocate, our barrister before the real Supreme Court - not our own recent confection or the risibly entitled European Court of Justice which prisoners of lobby groups and the spirit

of the age - our advocate is the Holy Spirit Himself. The real Supreme Court is the Last Judgement. The judge is Christ.

So the believer, in Isaiah, for all his suffering, is confident of his acquittal in the only court that matters in eternity. 'Who thinks he has a case against me? The Lord is coming to my help, who dares to condemn me?'

The Psalmist, too, rejoices at the Lord's response to his appeal. In the last assize, 'He will keep my soul from death, my eyes from tears and my feet from falling. And I will walk in the Presence of the Lord in the land of the living.'

We should not deceive ourselves as to the reality. We are sinners, condemned by our own fallen nature. As Mother Teresa memorably remarked when being handed the then cult book 'I'm OK You're OK', many years ago, I'M NOT OK. YOU'RE NOT OK. THAT'S WHY WE NEED JESUS!'

St. James gives us some clues as to the evidence we might need for acquittal at the Supreme Court of God and total conviction in the material courts of Man. He advertises some of the Corporal Works of Mercy, or more especially separates out the talkers from the doers. Simply advertising our assent to the goodness of God and wishing the disadvantaged well in a perfunctory manner is utterly useless. Indeed if we don't intend to do something about it then better not say anything. Verbal benevolence needs some incarnating in reality.

My old school motto was 'Faire sans Dire' – which we freely translated as, 'Shut up and get on with it.'

Of course we need to tell people about Jesus but then we need to live as if it was true – because it is. Belief and action necessarily co-inhere.

Otherwise we are simply hypocrites. Indeed the word 'hypocrite' comes from the Greek word for 'Actor'. In other words we are pretending to be someone that we are not. So Catholics take the proclamation of the Faith as both word and action. Belief is the spur to action. As St James says, Faith without works is dead. Show me the evidence of your faith in what you do. Give me the proof. It is that evidence that will exonerate us at the Last Judgement (Mt.25) or the lack of it that will, terrifying thought, condemn us