



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year B-November 14<sup>th</sup> 2021

***Readings: Daniel 12: 1-3, Psalm 15, Hebrews 10: 11-14. 18,  
Mark 13: 24-32***

There is a movie legend that the great John Wayne, (for our younger viewers Wayne, in cinematic terms single-handedly won the Wild West and the Second World War), was cast as the Centurion at the foot of the Cross. His single line, recorded later in a studio, was to say, 'Truly this man was the Son of God.' Wayne delivered this climactic line with all the enthusiasm and competence of a dyslexic reading a telephone directory. The producer, in exasperation, is said to have shouted, 'With AWE, John, With AWE.' And Wayne duly responded with 'AW, Truly this man was the Son of God.' It's a nice story and, if you ever see 'The Greatest Story ever Told', you will sympathise with the producer's exasperation.

This story came back to me as I was reading and reflecting on today's readings. We are, scripturally and liturgically speaking, entering the last days - the climax of salvation history, the judgement, the end of time, the revelation of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

It is both a time of deep distress and triumphant hope.

We are beginning to get a little of the feel of these times with the growing awareness that there is distress in the natural order, that man's dominion has been exploitative and predatory rather than as stewards of the Earth

on behalf of the Lord of all the manors there have ever been. This has stimulated a well-meaning concern for this planet earth, our island home but failed to turn men's hearts to God. An outbreak of Gaia worship and primitive panentheism are no substitute for repentance and return. These just end up as an irrational worship of matter – materialism, idolatry, the old familiar problems. And besides if atheistic Darwinism is right then there is no supervening reason to care what happens to the weaker creature or the fabric of this world.

Couple this with an outbreak of plague, pandemic, the first in a century, and the doomsayers are beginning to sound as if they may have a point. I need hardly add that, to my knowledge, no senior religious functionary has actually dared to join up the dots here.

Our problem, as Western Christians, is that this language of Jesus, along with his frequent references to Hell, have become very hard for us to hear. We have been brought up on too much 'Jesus – the fluffy bunny theology'. Niceness is all. It isn't. Where we have it that is a plus but it's not foundational.

What we are lacking is precisely what John Wayne was missing - more AWE.

There are tensions always in the Christian story between the two poles of transcendence and immanence. The almighty-ness of God and the nearness of God in our humanity in Jesus. This latter, proximity and cosiness, can rapidly lead to a domestication of Jesus which reduces Him to a super-charged 'mate' who spends His time wiffing on about love in all its glorious inexactitudes and non-specifics. **THAT IS NOT JESUS CHRIST KING OF THE UNIVERSE.**

Before we can appreciate who He is and just what an incredible sacrifice was made from the Nazarene kitchen to the Calvary hill, we have to grasp the almighty-ness of God, the glory of His plan for Man, the

condescension of the Creator of all worlds to the fallen creature, made in His image, that is you and me.

We have to hear the trumpet blast on the storm girt mountain that surrounded Moses on the ascent. We have to stand before the blazing fire of the unconsumed bush. We have to walk to Moriah with Abraham, the heart already sacrificed. We need to incorporate the terrifying visions of Ezekiel and Daniel into our spiritual geography. We have to hide in the rock cleft with Elijah to endure the whirlwind and wait on the thin silence and the voice of God. We have to incorporate into our theological thinking, our daily prayers, our common devotions in the Mass and at the Benediction, the AWE, the transcendent glory of Almighty God – the sun rays of the monstrance that recall the Transfiguration of Jesus and the revelation of His eternal identity.

We need to recapture that vision in the greater elevation of the Bread of Life and the Chalice of Salvation, the blinding light that encompassed St Paul on the Damascus Road and the voice that called both him and us.

Much of the geography of modern churches militates against this. The Westward facing altar tilts the balance toward the anthropocentric – man centred worship, the gathered club. The abolition of altar rails denies the faithful the opportunity to kneel in reverence, to wonder, reflect and adore. Neither novelty was considered never mind mandated by the Second Vatican Council.

But we must do our best. Stand under the clear night sky and see Orion in full flight, the distant twinkle of Cassiopeia, the searchlight of Polaris and Scorpio rising.....don't worship them!!! But restore some perspective on the immensity and glory of the One who made them and us. Then we will know what the Psalmist says and the Wisdom writers tell – 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. The beginning but not the end. If we are to know truly what He has done for us and our hope of glory in

Christ we must recapture the Transcendent.

We need not fear the days ahead if we know the ALL MIGHTY is just that and, immanent in Christ, He walks with us through the distress of the nations. 'You who fear the Lord, love Him and your hearts will be radiant.' writes the author of Ecclesiasticus. 'let us not fall into the hands of men but into the hands of the Lord for as is His majesty, so is His mercy'