



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

***Readings: Isaiah 62:1-5, Psalm 88, Acts 13: 16-17. 22-25,  
Matthew 1: 1-25***

Present- now – here – gift- show-offer

Words are a curious commodity. We think we know their meaning but, according to context and emphasis, all sorts of unexpected and unlooked for nuances appear. Let me give you an example.

If I were to ask the younger members of our congregation what they are looking forward to in the next few hours, I'm pretty certain what the answer would be. (If I asked the older members it would probably be that it would soon be over !) Those of us, young and old, who hang up our stockings, or for the more optimistic, pillowcases are excitedly expecting PRESENTS. There will be gifts from Saint Nicholas and, we hope, from family and friends. A PRESENT is a sign of love.

But PRESENT has other meanings too. When I was a little boy, at school in Polruan, my teacher, Miss Ricketts would begin the day by reading the register. As each child's name was read out we had to reply, 'PRESENT, Miss' because PRESENT means that I am here. It is the statement that I am not missing from where I should be but that my Presence is both required and real. (When we talk about the REAL PRESENCE of CHRIST in the Sacrament, He is truly here)

And that is not the end of the matter. If I say- ‘At Present I am talking to you’ That means I am talking to you NOW. The Present is NOW. It is different from the past but is a direct result of it. It is different from the future but will hugely influence it. NOW is the reality in which we live – although always a split second behind. We live in the here and now – history stretching behind and before us. (Remember when , in the desert before the Bush of Fire asked God His Name? And God replied ‘I AM’ – the first person singular of the verb ‘To Be’. He is the eternal present encompassing past and future, time and eternity.)

And we have not exhausted its meaning yet. We can say that we PRESENT something – for inspection (our thesis), for approval (a play), as a sign of readiness (present arms), as a demonstration (Christ in the arms of Mary).

And we Present something as an offering, a sign of trust and sacrifice and hope. (We present the Bread and Wine, the tokens of ourselves, our work, our play).

And so it goes on .....but I must not.

We have homes to go to, presents to open and joy to share.

Here Christ is truly Present – that’s why we come. Otherwise we could stay at home and raise a toast to Jesus from our dining table. Jesus is HERE. Jesus is NOW. Jesus is OFFERED for us. Jesus is the supreme GIFT of God’s love. He is the point and purpose of all our Christmasses. Jesus is the One whom Our Lady and, through her, all the Church of God PRESENTS to the world for its salvation. What greater gift could we celebrate?

He is truly Present in time and in eternity. He reaches into our time and presence through the sacred mystery of the MASS.

He is not a memory or an idea but GOD truly and fully PRESENT.

And today to celebrate that Presence we have a little present for the Church.

A great, faithful and unassuming servant of God in this Church, Frank Philip, died just over a year ago. Christ has taken him home at the age of 93. Up to the end he was ever in here praying, praying before the Presence of Christ in the Tabernacle where the Eternal Flame burns. In thanksgiving for Frank's life we have been given a beautiful silver Ciborium to hold the sacred host, the Bread of Heaven, in the Tabernacle.

NOW – HERE - ALWAYS – THE SUPREME PRESENT/GIFT OF JESUS IS TRULY PRESENT and from the Ciborium we will receive His Body, the Bread of Life. You wont get a better present now or ever.

BLESSING: Lord bless this ciborium and bless us as we receive the Bread of Life from it.

And may the soul of our friend and fellow pilgrim, Frank Philip, rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.