



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year C-February 20th 2022

Readings: 1 Samuel 26: 2 7-9 12-13 22-23, Psalm 102, 1 Corinthians 15: 45-49, Luke 6: 27-38

Jesus, you might think from time to time, doesn't ask much. Not much – just the seemingly impossible here. An enemy is, by definition, a person whose disposition is not just opposed to your irritating demeanour or unacceptable views but whose very object is the eradication of people like you. So, Lord, you want me to love them. Pull the other one.

As the Russian troop exercises swarm around the Ukrainian border and the great wounds of a thousand years of east-west animosity fester in open view, this is not just an academic question about our own handling of the petty spites and misunderstandings of our everyday lives – though, of course, international conflicts are usually simply that domestic sin writ large and magnified by the calculating lens of Satan. How Jesus' command to us – it's not a request or suggestion – manifests itself in reality is beautifully answered in today's Old Testament reading.

Saul, the first king of Israel, is paranoid. The little shepherd boy, whose cunning and competence brought victory over the giant Philistine and his army, has morphed into a real and present danger to his throne and to his dynasty. Outbursts of rage and homicidal intentions towards David

have led to the flight and exile of this now, guerrilla leader. The obvious solution for David is to seek the life of his sometime patron and now, literally, mortal enemy. .

On two occasions this becomes a real possibility. Prior to today's account there had been an incident where Saul, pursuing David, had inadvertently nipped into the very cave in which David was hiding and, in the immortal words of the Living Bible translation, 'gone to the bathroom'. So consumed was Saul by his royal efforts that he was oblivious to David cutting off a corner of his wisely discarded cloak.

When the newly purged Saul rejoined his troops and at a safe distance, David was able to brandish the little rag of regal cloak as evidence of his loyalty. 'Coulda killed ya but didn't'. Saul weeps and repents and returns home after extracting a willing promise from David not to prevent the succession of his dynasty – David's beloved buddy, Jonathan.

But today, the old evil has rekindled in Saul's mind. The power of David grows. The dynastic marriage has failed, Saul's paranoia is rampant. His troops are sent out to destroy the wild dog of the desert. This time David, under cover of darkness, goes to the very heart of the enemy camp and steals Saul's spear and water jar. David's companion, Abishai, recommends an instant and final solution. Kill him now. But David will not. Saul, for all his wickedness, remains the Lord's anointed – with David in waiting.

So we come to the reveal. David, having regained the far peak with his trophies, calls on Saul to acknowledge the truth of David's loyalty and call off the dogs of war. Huge embarrassment for Saul, horrific embarrassment for his security detail etc. Saul goes home. David is wise enough not to join him.

With the benefit of hindsight we can see David's wisdom. Saul falls to the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, the dynastic problem is solved when his

beloved son perishes with him. David inherits the throne for which the prophet Samuel long ago anointed him. David has been content to wait upon the Lord for the fulfilment of His promise. He has not sought the triumph of good by evil means. He has given his enemy every chance to repent and reconcile. He comes to kingship with a clean pair of hands. There can be few more extraordinary examples of loving your enemy in human history. David is prepared to risk all for the sake of faith and integrity and the wellbeing of the man whose unjust hatred consumes and eventually destroys him.

In commanding us to love our enemies Jesus is on familiar territory as a Son of David. He is also on familiar territory as Son of God, for God continues to want the best even for those who oppose Him to the point of crucifying Him outside the walls of the capital city of David.

Like David, we are not called upon to be fools or voluntary victims but to witness for good and truth and right because we want the best for all the creatures of God. We are anointed and we will not act against that covenant.

Like Jesus, we have to be prepared to enter the fortress of those who hate us and proclaim the message of reconciliation and restoration, whatever the cost.

The Star of David and the Cross of Christ are not contrary signs but signs of the same and eternal kingdom.