



MEDITATIONS FOR LENT by Father Robbie Low

**FIFTH WEEK OF LENT – TUESDAY Numbers 21: 4-9**

It is an odd interlude in the Exodus wanderings. The smouldering discontent of the Hebrew peoples bursts into flame and open dissent from the leadership – not for the first time or the last. God is royally brassed off with this whingeing and ungrateful crew and, in response to their backbiting tongues, sends a plague of poisonous snakes among them. Very appropriate. When the worried moaners approach Moses for a solution he asks God, God tells him to do a strange thing. Make a serpent of bronze and hang it on a pole, All who look at it will live. The threat of Death is undone by this simple act of faith.

Curiously, later, Asclepius, the Greek healer, has a similar rod and this rod becomes the Caduceus, the serpent entwined rod, the symbol of healing. What is curious about this adoption of the serpent is that the cause of the people's mortality becomes the sign of their salvation. It is, as far as I know, the earliest case of Homeopathy – the cure of like by like.

It is interesting then that Jesus refers to this episode as a direct comparison to what will happen to Him on Calvary – lifted up from the earth, He will draw all to Him for salvation. What we, with the benefit of hindsight, recognise is that the cure for death turns out to be death. His death cures our death. Our mortality is transformed by His immortality. The poison of the serpent is neutralised and defeated by taking it to the Cross.

***Spiritual exercise:*** Pray (or, if you're brave, sing) the hymn  
'Lift high the Cross'