



MEDITATIONS FOR LENT by Father Robbie Low

FOURTH WEEK OF LENT – SATURDAY John 7: 40-52

‘Are you a Galilean too?’

Poor old Nicodemus, the one-time night visitor to Jesus, the Pharisee, the one to whom the quintessential Gospel was revealed (Jn 3 v 16), merely asks a reasonable question. ‘Surely the Law does not pass judgement upon a man without giving him a hearing and discovering what he is about?’

He gets short shrift. Jesus is from Galilee. He can’t be the Messiah. Of course they don’t know the facts but, in the best traditions of the tabloid press, ‘Never let the facts interfere with your prejudice.’

What the enemies of Jesus want is not a trial but a conviction. The last thing they want is to give Him a platform. It is in the nature of tyranny to be unwilling to listen to the other and terrified of convincing contradiction. And tyranny hates humour, being laughed at, because it is, in reality, fragile and a lie. This is true in religion as well as politics. Truth does not have to tolerate abuse but it can always survive dissent by its very nature. Because the truth will out.

What we see in the Gospel passage here is a preference for totalitarianism and an unjust dismissal of the ‘other’. Not even a kangaroo court but a verdict arrived at without benefit of even a show trial.

Much though we might like to think of this as an alien experience in good old Blighty, the reserve of foreign dictatorships etc, we increasingly, via social media, see abuse, rancid prejudice and de-platforming. In a society increasingly and deliberately divided, folk listen only to those who agree with them and,

increasingly we find that lobby groups in government, corporations, educational establishments and media outlets manage the news, set themselves up as judge and jury, criminalise anyone who questions their conclusions and demonises them. The mere audacity to hold a different opinion, as Catholics often do, leads to secular damnation. We recall the times, in the history of this island, when the only platform Catholics were granted was the scaffold.

So we have to answer the question in our own time....

Are you a Galilean?

And if that means a follower of Jesus , a lover of truth, a defender of justice against the tyrannies of institutional wickedness, then there is only one response

Spiritual exercise:

Read an account (online) of one of the English martyrs eg St.Cuthbert Mayne.