



MEDITATIONS FOR LENT by Father Robbie Low

FOURTH WEEK OF LENT – WEDNESDAY John 5: 17-30

'The hour is coming when the dead will leave their graves at the sound of His voice'

For a religion that stands or falls on the truth of the Resurrection, there is surprisingly little agreement between competing sects on the reality of what comes next.

There are the cheery evangelicals who seem to think that, post-mortem, the fully signed up will be instantly translated into glory. (This is a popular prejudice held by the non-attending majority who cheerfully tells their children that Grandad is a star in the sky or is reunited with Grandma and they are both sitting on the celestial equivalent of a beach in Lanzarote.)

There are the 'Non-existers', waiting for the recreation of the dust they have so recently blown up the crematorium chimney.

There are the 'Waiters', all held in suspended animation waiting for the last trump. Etc. etc.

Then there is us, the Catholics, the original brand who believe in a thing called 'purgatory'. I say 'thing' because it's more of a condition than a geographical location – though I suppose a week at Butlins or enduring the enormities of Fuerteventura might qualify for redemptive suffering.

The Purgatory – or purification – comes from the Greek word for fire – 'pur' and it refers, not to the hellfire of destruction but to the purifying fire of God's love,

the warmth of His affection, the light that leads us homeward, the energy that empowers us in the mystic quest, the forge that bends us into fit shape, the flame that consumes the rubbish we have accumulated, the unworthy, the unholy – all that keeps the unholy from the eternal presence of the All Holy.

We are not yet 'IN' but we are on the way. The Faith is not magic – one bound and he was free tripe- it is a relationship and, being in Christ, we do not either cease to exist or instantly graduate *summa cum laude*. We are on the way – supported by the Church on Earth and encouraged by the Church in Heaven. If we have our fingers, as it were, on the lowest rung of the ladder of Purgatory, we are safely on the way. If we are asked by friends with different interpretations of the Scriptures we may justly reply, as my old Glaswegian priest friend taught me, 'Why go to Heaven as you are....and spoil it?'

Spiritual exercise: Identify the major obstacle to holiness in your life and ask your patron saint to pray for you and your guardian angel to watch over you when that temptation or fault arises.