



MEDITATIONS FOR LENT by Father Robbie Low

**THIRD WEEK OF Lent – FRIDAY Mark 12: 28-34**

*.....love your neighbour as yourself'*

If I were to tell you that I got every morning, looked in the bathroom mirror and said, 'How lovely you are', you might conclude that either I had lost my marbles or, at its most charitable, that I should have gone to Specsavers'.

The common modern understanding of Jesus' second great commandment is that, in order to love my neighbour as myself – I must love myself. This rampant narcissism seems utterly logical at first superficial glance and is at the root of many secular therapies that have emerged in my lifetime to plug the gap once occupied by the Faith. Rejoicing in names that begin with the prefix 'PSYCH', they discount the very meaning of the word itself which is 'soul' and embark, not on divine remedy but on a menu of self-help, self- affirmation, self -assertion and self -worth promotion. Once my therapist has enabled me, at considerable expense, to own who I am and truly love myself then I can begin to love others with the same passion that I feel for myself. You see now I truly know that, in the words of the advertisement, 'I am worth it'.

Unfortunately it does not quite work out like that. What makes me able to love you is not an elaborate exercise in self -hypnosis or a pursuit of rampant unreality about myself. What I need to be able to love you is to know that I am loved – not by me with my bathroom mirror fantasy – but by a love that does not depend on how I'm feeling and is unfailingly faithful and true. That love is truly divine. Once I know the love of God all else becomes possible. In being certain of His love for me, I can launch out on the risky business of loving others. My worth does not depend on my emotional state or yours for that matter. In the security of His love, I learn love. I learn that, in spite of the truth in the bathroom mirror, I am loveable. I don't need to indulge in some validating cosmetic or self-indulgent therapy.

I look at the Cross of Christ and see, in His sacrifice, the almost unbelievable truth that, in His amazing love and contrary to the presenting facts of my faithlessness and fragility, God thinks that I am worth it.

***Spiritual exercise:*** Embarrass yourself – stand in front of the Crucifix and accept that Jesus thinks you are worth it.