



MEDITATIONS FOR LENT by Father Robbie Low

THIRD WEEK OF LENT – SATURDAY Luke 18: 9-14

'Lord have mercy...'

When, in the year of my eldest son's birth, my beloved Grandma lay dying, my mother kept daily watch at her bedside. Very different people, my Grandma very overt, my mother never at home with emotionalism. Thus Ma came down stairs one morning hugely discombobulated.

'How embarrassing,' she proclaimed, 'Your Grandma has just thrown herself on the bed and repeatedly called out, 'Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy'.

As we were not a religious family until me, I was both surprised and delighted to hear the news. My Grandma had been brought up in that gloomy Protestantism where you were regularly persuaded that you were not good enough. Her refrain and fear was the catchphrase, 'Almost persuaded, almost persuaded...but LOST'.

Of course we are not good enough. That part is unquestionably correct. But that is where grace and salvation kick in. Our part is to repent and seek mercy at the mercy seat of God, which is the Cross of Jesus. The clown in Jesus' parable who reports back to God on his merits and publicly observable righteousness is a fool. The sinner who, keeping his distance and bowing his head, confesses to his unworthiness is the one who is 'on the money'.

Nor should mercy be seen simply as an exercise in calculated grovelling. It is a true expression of the reality of the heart or it is nothing. Furthermore, there is much more to it than that. When we say Kyrie Eleison, Lord have mercy, we are not simply seeking forgiveness and reconciliation but ALL the blessings of God.

In the Western Liturgy this is less clear because 'Lord have mercy' is only attached to the penitential rite. In the East the Kyrie (Gospodi Pomiluj) recurs and resonates throughout the liturgy. The MERCY of God is certainly about pardoning our sins but it is also about entering the great bounty of His glory and all the many blessings He longstop bestow on His returning, restored and reconciled children. If I have any breath or sense left at the end I hope that this will be my prayer. If not, I would be grateful if someone could say it for me.

Spiritual exercise: You are dying. Write down your last prayer and lodge it with your papers.