



MEDITATIONS FOR LENT by Father Robbie Low

THIRD WEEK OF Lent – THURSDAY Luke 11: 14-23

A house divided against itself cannot stand.

In the great High Priestly prayer in John's Gospel Ch 17, Jesus prays for Unity – unity so that all may believe in Him and that all believers may be one.

Disunity disfigures the Faith and disables the Mission. It dissuades the doubtful and delights the devil. Sadly the history of the Faith is riven with it. Apart from the regular revitalising of old heresies, the family of Faith has been rent asunder by two great and continuing schisms. The first, in 11th century, detached much of Eastern Christendom from the Catholic Church. The second, lessons unlearned, at the Reformation, set up a more pernicious process of 'rolling schism'. The removal of the Magisterium saw the replacement of a figure of unity, the Pope, by every man becoming a pope in his own front room. Theology became not a product of revelation but rather the cult of private opinion.

When I was an Anglican minister people would often ask me what the Church's teaching was on any particular subject. I would give them the traditional apostolic teaching. Then would then say, 'Well why does the vicar in the next parish say the opposite, the bishop different again and people in synod another version.' The inability to live with such destructive, self-regarding and time-wasting nonsense was a huge factor in making me consider the claims of the Universal Church.

Every year we have a week of prayer for Christian unity in which we have little 'lowest common denominator' services and congratulate ourselves on not burning one another anymore. This is marvellous if somewhat ancient news but we all know that the high water mark of ecumenism has passed. The post-conciliar Protestantisation of the liturgy, the collapse of the confessional, the marginalisation of Marian devotion, the 'abolition' of sin, has not led to revival and

the return of the schismatics but rather a weary and increasingly precipitous decline in the attendance of the faithful. Revelation does not afford the luxury of compromise. The Church is only attractive if she is true to Christ.

Whenever there was a headline about some controversial bishop talking heretical twaddle father used to say, before his very belated conversion, and I paraphrase, 'If you blighters don't believe it, why should I?'

Unity speaks of truth. Unity speaks of consistency, the tradition, the handing down faithfully of the Apostolic teaching learned at the feet of Jesus. We can settle for no less and anything less will not restore the lost, revive the lapsed or reinvigorate the mission. Unity is not a shabby compromise, a sticking plaster on the wounds in Christ's Body but a wholehearted pursuit of integrity of witness and worship, of mission and meaning, of sacramental certainty and common purpose.

Spiritual exercise: Read John 17 and commit to that vision of Jesus prayer.