



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Easter Vigil – Year C

Hallelujah!

Readings: Genesis 1:1-2:2, Ps 103, Genesis 22:1-18, Ps 15, Exodus 14:15-15:1, Exodus 15:1-6, 17-18, Isaiah 54:5-14, Ps 29, Isaiah 55:1-11, Ps 12, Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4, Ps 18, Ezekiel 36:16-28, Pss 41, 42, Romans 6:3-11, Ps 117, Luke 24: 1-12

Insofar as we have historical record or archaeological provenance, it would seem that every culture in the brief sojourn of Man has a ‘mythos’ or preponderantly accepted belief about ‘what comes next’. That is to say what follows the cessation of the engine of our mortality and our all too visible return to the dust from whence we came.

At one extreme is the Eastern mystical tradition of Buddhism which sees us, eventually freed from the tiresome round of self -improvement required by the Laws of Karma and Reincarnation, sees the dis-integration of the body and the soul, the latter being absorbed by a curious annihilation of identity and into some cosmic spiritual soup.

At the other end of the spectrum we find the Viking Vahalla – an all too tangible Hall of Heroes or Terrorists – on a permanent Saturday night bender. A steaming heap of malignant testosterone.

We might scabble through layers of ancient civilisations where every teacup and cornflake bowl is dutifully marked down as a ‘libation vase’ to a

pagan god and, hard by, find the bones of the sacrifice – infant or enemy – a propitiation for the remorseless and greedy tyrants of the Pantheon.

We can observe the Paradisal Gardens of Islamic afterlife where the weary desert warrior luxuriates in an eternal oasis indulging in what has hitherto been forbidden, alcohol that leaves no hangover and a harem of houris at his beck and call.

We may even hear the faint echo of the mythos of an afterlife in this largely secular and atheistic tail end of Western Culture. Go to the Crem and hear the humanist bleating about the future and ‘reunions’. (Where? one might ask.) and the ‘Grandad is now a star in the sky school of fantastical theology’.

The reality is that, throughout his story, Man has wrestled with his innate inability to conceive of his ‘not being’ or the narrative that would make sense of this apparently counter-factual conviction. The reality is that these long and irrepressible ‘intimations of immortality’ only make final sense in the Christian account. There we find the co-inherence in Christ of the mortal and the divine and the paradoxical triumph of the Cross. In this account, rightly labelled the ‘Good News’, firmly anchored both in history and in eternity, we see the origin of our otherwise strange conceit of immortality. It is the knowledge that, as the summit of creation, we are made in the image of God.

In our fallenness we have blurred but not obliterated that iconography, though nevertheless dis-qualified ourselves from Paradise. The Unholy cannot dwell eternally in the Presence of the All Holy. Humanity has grievously fallen short of its vocation. But, in Christ, God Himself has invested that humanity with His divinity and follows the earthly trails and

trials of our common lot – yet without sin.

We have, this last week, traversed the field of the Last Battle where, on Calvary's sacred heights, our ancient enemies of sin and death have been routed by the sacrifice supreme – the Son of God – the Passover Lamb without blemish – the Eternal Word enfleshed.

The Gates of Paradise, once locked and guarded against our return, now swing open to the sons of the new unfallen Adam – Jesus Christ and the daughters of the new Immaculate Eve – Mary.

Only by our incorporation in Christ, becoming part of His Body, can we hope to inherit eternal life. Via the sacramental life we both receive and realise Christ in our humanity and gain that re-entry to the Paradise of God. Thus, as St. Paul reminds us, life is not ended but gloriously changed, our intimations of immortality become living reality. 'Christ in you – the hope of glory'. Col 1 v 27 For, in Christ, our time is swept up into eternity, our humanity transformed by His divinity, our mortality transcended by His immortality.

This is indeed the Passover Feast, where the Blood of the Lamb turns away the Angel of Death. This is the Gospel truth we celebrate in every Mass since the Last Supper and until the World's End.

Little wonder that our sign is the Cross and our song is HALLELUJAH.