



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year C-July 17<sup>th</sup> 2022

***Readings: Genesis 18: 1-10, Psalm 14, Colossians 1: 24-28,***

***Luke 10: 38-42***

‘DO NOT THINK THAT WHAT YOU DO IN FAITH IS INSIGNIFICANT.’

By the Oaks of Mamre there was strange encounter and promise and laughter. By the Oaks of Mamre the future of the Faith was set in motion.

This is a strange story, most familiar to us, probably, in the great ikon by Andrei Rublev, of the three angels of the Presence, sitting at a makeshift table awaiting the offering of Abraham. The old, childless nomad is pitched in what shade may be found at this watering hole in the unforgiving heat of the noonday sun.

The story is puzzling. Abraham sees three men suddenly standing near. They are not identified but Abraham prostrates himself and refers to them as ‘Lord’. Indeed the writer of the Genesis, with the benefit of hindsight and divine inspiration, introduces them as ‘the Lord’. This is the second great clue to the Trinitarian nature of God – the first being in the opening creation account.

Abraham insists on offering hospitality. The day stretches out. The guests relax in the welcome shade while Abraham rushes to get water

for the washing of their feet, chivvying Sara into knocking up some loaves and getting the calf sacrificed to provide the best meal. When all has been done, the Lord asks where Sara is and is told that she is 'in the tent'. 'Well', the Lord says, (this time in the singular), ' Next year, without fail, I will visit you and your wife will have a son'. This is plainly ridiculous. Abraham is ancient and Sara well past childbearing.

Sara maybe in the tent but she is clearly eavesdropping because we are told that she laughs – so ludicrous is the prospect. That unthinkable, unimaginable prospect and promise is fulfilled in the birth of Isaac – whose very name means 'Laughter'- and upon whom will depend the very future of the People of God.

So here we are, under the shelter of the Oaks of Mamre, in the company of the ancient wanderer who has set out in faith, and his hitherto disappointed and barren wife. In the long landscape of history how insignificant this strange encounter might have seemed. Yet throughout the world and throughout time this critical piece of our salvation history is rehearsed in Church, in Synagogue and in Mosque as a critical and determinative moment.

To emphasise its importance we might recall that this historically insignificant event took place at the same time as the mighty empire of Egypt was in full and dominant swing. Yet who now remembers the name of the Pharaoh at that time? When the Hittite empire was expanding from the North, who can recall a single name of the warlord leaders? When Assyria burgeoned in brutal domination, which of us can give voice to a single tyrant king? And down the centuries...Babylon, Persia. We might remember the scourge of Alexander or the outings of a few Caesars but, even then, none have the regular attention or profound

significance in the history of Man as this old nomad and this divine encounter.

And, in the Gospel, who could have imagined that as Martha sweated over a hot stove to offer the Lord hospitality while her 'lazy' sister sat adoringly at Jesus' feet, the little domestic rebuke would be more studied down the subsequent millennia than Caesar's Gallic Wars, Herodotus, Tacitus or any other ancient text.

The reason these accounts are elevated above the blood stained parchment of human history is that they record the epiphanies, the encounters with the divine and the response of the faithful to that extraordinary gift of God's self revelation. Abraham could not, in spite of all the promises and hopes beyond all his wildest dreams, have known what God would do with that simple act of faithfulness in the shelter of the great Oaks of Mamre or Mary and Martha imagined that a sisterly spat would lead to a teaching on which the Church continues to reflect two thousand years on.

So with us. We do not know what the Lord will do with our acts of faithfulness. We know only that He will use them to His glory, now or in the time to come.

Be encouraged.

Never think that what you do in faith is insignificant.