



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year C-28<sup>th</sup> August 2022

***Readings: Ecclesiasticus 3: 17-18. 20. 28-29, Psalm 67, Hebrews 12: 18-19. 22-24, Luke 14: 1. 7-14***

This Sunday rejoices in the uninspiring title of 'The Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time.' A moment's reflection may lead us to conclude that this means that it is not very significant. After all its very humdrum normality proclaims a kind of grey irrelevance. Nothing exciting here, one might conclude. Turn the prayer wheel and shuffle off to a late breakfast.

But for us, mere mortals, this is misleading. No time for us is truly ordinary. The very gift of our being, our life is quite extra-ordinary. It is all we have – these few short years, scarcely an iota in the punctuation of eternity, to truly live, to seek the nature of eternal truth, to consult the charts of holy wisdom in the sacred texts, to victual our galley with bread for the journey and to configure our little craft to the long horizon and the voyage home – if indeed such a thing were possible.

Of course I understand that, for most of us, there is but the occasional glimpse of this supervening reality. This is the constant vision only of God Himself and the most advanced mystics. But we should be aware that, for us too, this is the truth and seek out those moments of

encounter with the unseen glory that leads us on – up the hard slog of the mountain of transcendence, across the stormy seas of this world to the ancient harbour walls of salvation, along the dust road of penitent humanity to the gates of the Eternal City, the Heavenly Jerusalem.

It is to this vision that author of the Letter to the Hebrews points us and bids us lift up our eyes and our hearts. He reminds us of the Exodus encounters between God and Moses, the terror of the power of God in the mountain fastness of revelation, the long arduous and sin stained journey to the Land of

the Promise, the extraordinary episode when the elders of Israel go with Moses into the mountain and behold God Himself on a pavement of sapphire and sit down in His Presence and, in a foretaste of the Mass, eat and drink and are unharmed. A brief and glorious moment in the midst of otherwise abject terror when the mountain of the Presence smoked and death was dealt to any who approached without permission.

But, reveals the writer, this is now superseded by the encounter in Christ. What we come to, the writer tells us, is Mount Zion, the City of the Living God. We have come to the heavenly Jerusalem and the city is in full festival mode. There are millions of angels and the whole church gathered there –that includes you and me – and each of us is a first born son, that is to say the heir of the Father, and a citizen of Heaven with all the privileges that citizenship implies in the ancient world. We come to God Himself, our judge, and we mingle with the saints who have been made perfect, those who have gone through the purification. We come to Jesus and to the blood of the new covenant which, from the Lamb of God alone, purifies us so that we may stand and dwell in the Presence.

This is some picture of our future, if we are faithful. But it is not simply picture of the future. The writer tells us – and thus God discloses to us – that this is a present tense thing too. What we come to is, he tells us, not known to the senses but...it is absolutely real, more real than the transience of the senses because it is spiritual and divine and eternal.

It is the revelation at the heart of the Mass. What the rationalist, the reductionist, the sensualist sees is, take this morning here for example..... a small otherwise insignificant building in an off street plot in a minor town , occupied by a few people paying intermittent attention to an elderly man in

funny clothes tinkering with bread and wine and water and emitting strange languages and performing puzzling gestures.

What the eye of faith glimpses – and it is why we come – is the in persona Christi robed in the symbolic vestments of salvation, before the altar of the supreme sacrifice of the Lamb of God , whose blood turns away the Angel of Death, invoking the transforming Holy Spirit of God to transubstantiate the ordinary into the eternal, the bread and wine into the Body and Blood, on the borderline of Heaven and Earth, while we join with the saints in light and the choirs of angels singing the Sanctus in the Presence.

This is the Mass. This is the foretaste of Heaven. It is both the here and now and the forever of God. It is a knowledge beyond the sensual, a wisdom of the soul, the gateway of salvation. It is the new covenant in Jesus.