



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

1st Sunday of Advent-Year A-November 27th 2022

Readings: Isaiah 2: 1-5, Psalm 121, Romans 13: 11-14, Matthew 24: 37-44

In today's Gospel Jesus compares the time of His Advent to the time of Noah. It is all too easy for us to float over that analogy with a comfortable feeling of familiarity. This is almost entirely because the story of Noah, the last of the early patriarchs, has been domesticated, neutralised and charmingly trivialised into a children's story about a floating zoo. Our children and grandchildren play with a toy boat, loading various animals on board under the benevolent gaze of a fuzzyfelt cartoon Noah. All light years from the real event or its causation.

Many years ago I was rehearsing a reader in the great Abbey Church of St Alban. The passage was Noah and she read it as you would read a nursery rhyme for 3 year olds. ' My goodness, children, didn't it rain'. I stopped her after a few lines and told her to imagine that it was the story of a nuclear bomb falling on St Albans. Total devastation. Hardly any survivors. Wreckage and ruin everywhere. There was a long pause while she reflected. THEN she returned and read it beautifully and powerfully and with understanding.

The story of Noah is one of Divine Judgement. The Scripture tells us that Man had become so corrupt and wicked that God regretted that He had ever made Him – never mind in His own image. The descent from Eden had been spectacular, precipitous and swift. God, we are told, determines to sweep it all away, purge the Earth, cleanse it of the stink of Man. It is a story of Divine Judgement. Thus is an unpopular concept in the world and even in the modern Church. The modernist god, should he exist at all, is considered to be a soft touch, a moral doormat, a flaky old guy whose incontinent mercy means that everyone gets a free pass to Heaven – whether they want it or not. This ‘god’ is a Universalist. It doesn’t matter what you do because there is no judgement and therefore no justice. Whoever this guy is he is not the God of the Bible, nor the One represented in the person of Christ His Son. Indeed, Jesus talks more about Hell than anyone else in the Bible. In the story of Noah we are told that Mankind has become so sin sick that he has ‘filled the world with violence’ and, so corrupt has he become, that God is sorry that He ever made Man. God’s judgement is to wash the filth away – the filth of Man – and return creation to its former order, when the waters covered the earth, and start again with Noah, the righteous man and his little family. The task of rescuing creation is given to Noah, breeding pairs and sevens of clean creatures, the number of perfection. The relentless rain pours for 40 days, the land is submerged for 150.

When Noah and family emerge onto the mountaintop, it is into a new world. The Ark, the floating wooden box which will prefigure both the later wooden box, the Ark of the Covenant which will contain the Word of God, and the Immaculate Wordbearer who will bring Christ into the world, is a prefiguring of the Church. The Church rides high on the waters of Chaos and death. She is the Ark of Salvation. The very first

thing Noah does, on landing, is to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving – he worships.

If we are to take our place in the Ark of Salvation we must be righteous, not complicit in the violence and viciousness that obtains. We can be sure the Lord, sooner or later, will destroy the wickedness on the Earth. If Man continues sinning and impenitent, the Lord will act. But we are not a violent society, you say. We have been largely at peace for nearly seventy five years. Yet, in the midst of that peace, we have killed more of our own than any war. The toll of the Innocent, the unborn, 10 million plus

here alone, has taken the lives of vastly more human beings than all the wars of history. In the recent pandemic, we watched governments desperately trying to save old people from Covid while rolling out plans for increasing the already obscene death rate for children in the abattoirs of the innocent. And you think God hasn't noticed? To add insult to injury, the proclaimed sign of God's promise not to flood again, the Rainbow, has been hijacked by those gravely disordered souls deliberately disobedient to the creation mandate. As a civilisation and a culture we have largely abandoned God. We have become complacent about our own righteousness and presumptuous about God's mercy. The question Advent asks of God's people is always: 'Are we ready for His coming? How does God see us? Pleased to have created us or regretting the day? AND.... Have we been loving enough to tell others about the Ark of Salvation or been selfish with the gifts of God? Are we longing for the Lord and does that shine through in our lives?'

As in the Days of Noah, Jesus says. Look around you.....

Brothers and sisters, this is a time of challenge, of preparation and excitement. Pray for the whole Church to be re-energised by the Gospel urgency that alone can rescue us and bring us to repentance and thus

avoid Christ's condemnation at the Last Judgement. Pray for the conversion of our culture and for its rejection of the ways of disorder and death. And ask the question.... When was the last time you spoke to anyone outside the Faith about Jesus?