



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A

Blessed are the poor in spirit

Readings: Zephaniah 2:3, 3:12-13, Ps 146, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Matthew 5: 1-12

Today I want to talk about humility. You will have gathered, over the years, that this is a special charism of mine. I am, if I may say so, rightly proud of my humility and, if I may presume further, you are very fortunate to have me, an expert in the field, condescend to explain it to you. Indeed, only the other day, one of my loyal fanbase was kind enough to affirm this.

‘Father’, she said, ‘there is no doubt that you have a lot to be humble about.’

My dear late friend, Sr. Grace – God rest her soul, used to say that when somebody starts talking about ‘integrity’, it’s time to count the teaspoons.

In short, a man who advertises his humility is, predictably, an utter fraud.

Bearded on the subject by an angry parishioner in a dysfunctional church, my good friend, Fr. John Rice whose austere exterior disguises a wonderful

sense of humour, replied, with a completely straight face, ‘I think that you should know that I won the ‘HUMILITY PRIZE’ three years running at

Seminary!’ His critic was stunned. ‘Really? I had no idea’. – No, not really.

Humility is, of course, the gateway to reality. It is a constant recognition of our place in an immense universe and our little role in the salvation history of God.

The Beatitudes, from which this quality is drawn, are, far from a crazy list of impossible demands, rather a template for holiness in the ultimate encounter with the reality of the Divine Life.

So what is humility and why does it matter so much?

Humility is both the opposite of and the antidote to PRIDE.

Pride is the foundational sin on which all other disobedience rests and from which all other iniquity flows.

It is an wholly false view of the self.

It is the central and most misleading lie.

It is the recalibration of truth in the image of oneself and the making of god in the image of Man, a reversal of creation and at the heart of pagan darkness and deceit. As St Paul reminds us...humanity has nothing to boast about.

It is the springboard which launches Satan and the fallen angels into the abyss. Their resentment of God for His plan of redemption and His promotion of the mudblood creature of Man above the dignities of Heaven is born of a self-regard which places them higher than God in their faltering wisdom. Pride leads to envy which leads to lust for power and on to wrath. It is Pride which so distorts the Satanic view of reality and leads to a burning hatred for both God and Man and the kindling of the fires of Hell.

Similarly and consequentially, it is at the root of Man's idiotic and clumsy fall from grace. It is the simple folly that we can dispense with the Word of God because we know better. The Fall is the tragic ad absurdum of Human Pride.

Humility is the road back to the Paradise of God and the healing of the birth wound of Original Sin. And how can we find this road back?

The gateway to the lost path, the eternal highway, is through the portal of penitence. In a full and proper preparation for the Sacrament of Liberation – which is the confessional – we encounter the truth about ourselves and God. We stand before the Cross of Christ and witness both how far we have fallen

short of God's glory and the cost of our sins and also, and overwhelmingly, how much He has loved us and loves us still. The Confessional and our preparation for it is the great place for the wounding and vanquishing of the besieging sickness of our self-regard which is our Pride. As on Ash Wednesday, when we receive the reminder of our mortality and our folly and our hope, we are humbled in the dust from which we came. From that lowly recognition of eternal realities, we can, paradoxically, begin to see the world as Christ sees it, from the Cross of Sacrifice – each life a gift, each one the object of His redemption. We can then begin to put Christ in the other person first. Contrary to all our fears about guilt and humiliation and shame we are therein set free to see the world, the Gospel hope and our part in the mission and ministry of Christ in the glorious light of a new dawn.

PRIDE is a Prison, often of our own making.

PENITENCE is the Promise of the Pardon that sets us free.

HUMILITY is the condition that keeps us on the High Road to Heaven