



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

7th Sunday of Easter - Year B

Glory

Readings: Acts 1: 12-14, Ps 27, 1 Peter 4: 13-16, John 17: 1-11a

Outside the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent we say or sing in the liturgy of the Mass a third century hymn called the Gloria. It is, of course, based on the song of the angels announcing the birth of the Messiah to the shepherds on the hillside of Bethlehem. But what is this glory?

We think of human glory, razzle- dazzle, self - glorification, spiritual bling. But the original Hebrew word has few if any of these sparkling implications. Wlt refers primarily to weight, to heaviness or what we might call 'gravitas'. It is the implication of natural and profound authority.

When we listen to fellow human beings speak or watch them disport themselves we are conscious of that factor especially in leadership. Is there a genuine conviction and undiluted authenticity? If not, however much the speaker may try there will be no lasting response.

Glory, in the New Testament, picks up this theme but adds to it a sense of honour and renown. It refers to someone worthy of praise, in the case of 'worship' beyond all else and all other.

By the time the word travels into Latin and French it acquires the additional sense of magnificence, splendour and fame.

So, when we come to join the angels in sing 'Gloria in excelsis Deo' all those things come together in our minds and in the song of our hearts. What does glory to God in the highest mean?

We know that neither men nor angels can possibly add to the Glory of God but in singing this praise we are both acknowledging the reality of that glory and our desire to reflect it when we do His will.

So, in today's Gospel, Jesus talks a lot about glory.

'I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work which you gave me to do; and now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory which I had with you before the world was made.'

When the angels sing the Gloria, they are celebrating the inbreaking of Heaven into Earth. (The glory that Jesus had before the world was made is shown forth within the creature of Man, incarnating the person of the Godhead, the Second Person of the Trinity.) In this way the Father has been glorified in Jesus and will be shortly glorified in His sacrifice. Such love!

In the Ascension of Christ we witness the inbreaking of the restored Earth into Heaven. Man is elevated into the Divine.

The deeper Man goes into the darkness of the unknowable depths of the divine, the more clearly his steps are illuminated by the LUX MUNDI, the Light of the World. That is, as St Paul notes, 'Christ in us, the Hope of glory.'

When, in our prayers, we round things off with the 'Glory Be...' , we are simply praying the recognition of reality. We ascribe glory to God. We sing this, not to creep to the Almighty but to remind ourselves of the truth. It is the only realistic reaction to the Divine Presence.

The Gloria goes further, linking that declaration of God's Glory to Peace on the Earth. 'Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.' This also guards and proclaims an unarguable truth. Where God is not truly glorified in Christ, the Prince of Peace, Man is in rebellion against God and thus, as a follower of the rebel angels, at war with both God and his fellow man. Right glory and true peace are inextricably linked. The praise of God in Christ is the road to the capital city of peace, the new Jerusalem.

Jesus' earthly ministry has glorified The Father. Now, in the Passion, the Father will glorify the Son by the act of sacrificial love that is the Cross. This is the revelation of the amazing love that resides at the heart of the Godhead.

And that is not the end of the matter for Jesus tells us that, we get to participate in this overwhelming truth. As we follow Christ Jesus Our Lord, so that glory is revealed in us. We become glorifiers of God in our lives and in our witness. We are, according to Jesus, by our love of Him

and our faithful following, intimates of God – as Christ is in the Father and the Father in Him so Christ is in us and we in Him and the original image of God in Man, restored, revitalised, refurbished, reconciled, renewed. As we go about our daily tasks we are conscious of the moments when Heaven breaks through to the Earth in the skies above Bethlehem and on the altars of Christendom. And we are astonished and challenged anew when we comprehend, and not for the last time, that, in Jesus Christ Our Lord and Saviour, we, of the Earth, break through to the Heavens, reaching across the border of the nave and the sanctuary to receive the Presence at each Mass of Christendom and go out to the world to glorify His holy Name.

To God be the glory.....