



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Baptism of Federico Piram Mileham

Readings: Ephesians 6 v 10 – 20, Psalm 83, Matthew 5 v 13 - 17

On my annual pilgrimage to the Eternal City, having survived the rigours of queues and security, I kneel on the red porphyry disc at the entrance to the great basilica of St Peter's. Hereon, where emperors and kings were crowned, I too make obeisance to Christ, acknowledging both His Presence and His supreme authority. Then, while the heaving throng take a sharp right to take 'selfies' in front of the Pieta, I 'hang a left' to greet two of the greatest and most perceptive saints of Christendom. First, to kneel at the altar rail before the incorrupt body of Pope St Pius X. Not because I am 'rigidist' or a 'backwardist' or obsessed by liturgical choreography, but because Pius X was that rare thing in a Papa – a working class boy who had put in his time as a parish priest and, prophetically identified and understood the origins of the unfolding crisis of our times, the surrender to Modernism, - the desire to be well thought of amongst the chattering classes, the preference for the Zeitgeist – the spirit of the age – rather than the Holy Spirit of God and thus the consequent dilution and betrayal of the Faith.

My next stop is two doors up on the left for here resides the relics of the great Archbishop of Constantinople, St. John Chrysostom – 'the Golden Gob' – the great 4 th century preacher of Orthodoxy and victim of persecution by malign secular and religious powers, for his unswerving fidelity to Christ. He died at the end of one of his several periods of exile. I preface the sermon therefore with a reminder of these two heroes of the Faith because they understood all too well the great battle of our time and because St. John gives the Catechism one of the great defining phrases for our understanding of Holy Baptism. He describes Baptism as 'The BATH of ENLIGHTENMENT'.

For us, we who live in the catastrophic wake of the so -called human,

post 18 th century 'Enlightenment', this is perhaps a strange phrase. For us the 'Enlightenment' speaks of the tragic uncoupling of the Queen of Sciences, Theology, from the natural sciences. These are centuries when pagan materialism has swept the board in Western civilization and we have seen the consequences of Reason divorced from supervening spiritual reality. For, IF MATTER IS ALL THERE IS.....THEN WE DON'T MATTER AT ALL. The human enlightenment, the much celebrated 'freedom' from the 'religio', the bonds of love between God and Man, led directly to the guillotine, the death camps, the gulags, the killing fields, the abortion clinics, the siren call for euthanasia. Nothing could be farther from the true Enlightenment of which St John Chrysostom speaks.

We live in the midst of a philosophical war with mortal consequences. In one scenario – the modernist dream- it is revealed that we are a random agglomeration of molecules with no origin in the hands of a creator. We have no purpose. We have no destiny and no significant end. Our highest feelings are mere chemical events and our conclusion is as a sack of rotting compost. Perhaps not too difficult to understand the current crisis of mental health and existential depression afflicting our continent. In the Enlightenment of which St John speaks and the which Saint Pius X resolutely defends we are awakened to the glorious reality that we are created by a loving Father. We are made in His image. To each of us He has given an unique purpose. We have an eternal destiny in the presence of the Living God.

The entry point to that vision is in the waters of Baptism where, in those few drops of flowing water the candidate is immersed in the Word of God, washed of the separation of sin, lifted high above the flood of judgement and chaos into the Ark of Salvation, marked by the Cross' indelible sign, adopted into the family of God, the pilgrim people who, liberated, pass through the Red Sea on their journey to the Land of the Promise.

The baptised joins the rank upon rank of the saints, saved and being saved, that process and relationship which unites us to the eternal and bathes us in the dazzling Light which was revealed on Mount Tabor's glorious height. The effulgence of the Transfigured Christ, the Lux Mundi, is the light by which we journey and the eternal destiny to which we are called.

Welcome aboard, little brother.