



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

1st Sunday in Lent – Year C

We live between two Advents

Readings: Deuteronomy 26: 4-10, Ps 90, Romans 10: 8-13, Luke 4: 1-13

We, like most of the people who have ever lived and walked the Earth, live between the two Advents. Betwixt the first humble and obscure coming of the Saviour Lord, Jesus Christ, and His return in glory.

Our Advent journey reviews, in four short weeks, the long road from the Fall of Man, and his exile from Eden to the solution of salvation offered in the Sacrifice of the Son of God on Calvary. It involves us in the scarcely credible acceptance that the One, True and Almighty God has deigned to condescend in our humanity and dwell in the limitations of time in order to restore us to eternity with Him and, through our participation in the Body of Christ, to ascend into His divinity. We are, as St Paul points out, either the greatest fools who ever lived or the blessed who have, all unworthy, been given a glimpse of glory and the possibility of reconciliation and return.

We also live in a strange and uncomfortable tension between what is and what is to come. We have come to terms with the first Advent, almost domesticated it in our enthusiasm for the safety of the known.

The extraordinary story of the Virgin Mother which few outside the faithfulness of her husband and a narrow band of relatives can believe. The machinations of the military machine that is the Roman state, moving people around like so many human counters, obliging a near full-term mother to ride an ass some hundred miles on rough roads to a strange town with nowhere to stay and the ignominy of birthing in a shed.

We have domesticated this to the beautiful stable picture, the charming presepio that we love to decorate. The horrors of Herod that follow scarcely impinge because it is hidden behind the Christmas on days when few are at Church for the Holy Innocents. We pass over the terrors of the Flight into Egypt, the refugee camp years and the subsequent sneak back into the welcome embracing obscurity of Nazareth.

Just as we re-familiarise ourselves with the known, with the Holy Family, and give glory to God for His amazing grace, our minds and hearts are turned to the Second Advent, the unknown known which looms before all creation at the end of time. Christ Himself gives us a terrifying picture of the end times. It is more cataclysmic than the worst forecasts of the climate change activist as creation, from the highest heavens to the deepest oceans is disordered and dangerous. Wars abound. Mortal fear stalks the Earth. Everything we have known and cherished is at risk. In the midst of this alarmism, Jesus tells us to stay awake, read the signs of the times. Don't submit to the coarse and debauched and godless culture. Pray for strength and – then the tricky bit – 'do not be afraid'.

Are you serious, Lord?

Well, yes He is. This is what God always says to those who love Him and try to serve Him. Jesus goes on to tell us that, as when all this begins to

unfold, we are to stand up, literally, don't cower or grovel.....because your liberation is at hand. The slave is about to be freed, ransomed, redeemed. As ever the Christian is deeply counter-cultural. Not least because the culture is that of Fallen Man and we are to be the children of the Second Adam and the New Eve.

So Advent is huge time for the Church, for all who seek God, for all who follow Christ. Our eyes turn longingly and lovingly to the First Advent, that fruition of God's plan of salvation for which the Patriarchs longed and the Prophets foretold. We come, robed in purple, purple for penitence for our sins and purple for the seamless robe of imperial glory which is Christ's alone and which He wore to His enthronement on the Cross of Calvary. We come to kneel before the manger and adore and be part of the Holy Family, for that moment in time and out of time when Angels surround us, the Holy Mother welcomes and we join the humble shepherds as watchers and witnesses to the world.

We come also, with our attention on the here and now. We are alert, awake to how Christ is to be served in our time. We are Apostles not Antiquarians. And we look ahead to the time that is the end of time, whether it comes in our little mortal span or not, ready to stand up and lift up our hearts and our heads and pray the coming of the King and the triumph of His Kingdom.

For if we truly love Jesus, there is no need to be afraid.

Even so, Come Lord Jesus.