



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

6th Sunday of Ordinary Time Year C

Resurrection reality

Readings: Leviticus 13: 1-2, 44-46, Ps 32, 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1, Mark 1: 40-45

A few weeks ago our Sacristan and Head Server, Paul, arrived in the Sacristy spitting tacks, as my grandma used to say. He had been listening to the radio on his way back from work and encountered a programme on 'near death experiences'. That is those occasions when death has technically occurred but the traveller returns to the rest of this mortal life. Some folk remember their experiences and some do not. I have encountered both. My own dear friend Fr Geoffrey Kirk returned from 6 minutes technical death on the floor of A&E with no mystical memory at all. He decided to check his human memory for brain damage by reciting the Psalms. When he had got to Psalm 8 unaided, he decided that the kit was still substantially intact.

Others, over the years, have reported many reassuring and common experiences around this time of transit. Paul, waited hopefully for the programme to suggest some link, at least, between these common experiences and the claims of life after death. Needless to say 'evidence' is only evidence when it suits your argument and the scientific materialists running the show were quick to dismiss any such unwelcome suggestions of a religious character. The 'near death' experiences were the result of the eccentricities of brain chemistry in the failing human unit. Of course, how stupid of me.

This may, I accept, possibly explain the 'light show' but unlikely to account for the liberation and peace and knowledge of the unknowable and the encounter with the departed or the Lord or the detailed overview of the scene of the 'near death' event whilst apparently unconscious, gone.

Never mind. The one lesson we may usefully learn from this sort of science is that, for all its fascinating exploration of the material world, this product of the so-called 'Enlightenment' is unwilling to accept the possibility of non-material being. In this it has been, not only flying in the face of the history of human consciousness and experience but become the tribune of the dark age of the denial of the image of God in Man.

All philosophies have consequences and this particular heresy has been the poisoned fountainhead of the mass brutalities from the tyrannies of the godless states, through to the holocausts and the abattoirs of the unborn.

For the Christian believer the evidence of Life after Death is centred on the Apostolic witness to the Risen Christ. St Paul emphasises its unique importance in this chapter of his first letter to the Church at Corinth. Here is to be found the nearest definition of what the future holds - insofar as any tongue or human language can express it.

It is worth recalling that our ability to describe this is severely limited in the same way it would be for an unborn to comprehend the world of which it was already a part but into which vastly wider context it would shortly emerge.

St Paul does his wonderful best. But he is pains to acknowledge that, if he/we are wrong then, frankly, there are no people more pitiable for their tragic stupidity.

Either Jesus rose from the dead and consequently, by His divine/human exchange, we are able to inhabit His Risen Body and transcend mortality, OR.... the materialists are right and we are merely sacks of briefly animated dung whose future is of little consequence and we behave accordingly.

In that case, as the cheerless Enlightenment philosopher, Hobbes, commented, 'Man's life' really is 'nasty, brutish and short.'

The doctrine of the Resurrection, the single most cosmically significant event in the history of Man, tells a different story.

The Doctrine of the Resurrection and its historic witness affirms the divine reality.

It confirms God's sacrificial love for His creature, Man.

It underlines the prospect that, having our origin in the intentions of the divine, we also may find there our eternal destiny.

It declares the invincibility of the Godhead and the transfiguration of Man by the indwelling divinity of the Christ.

It affords the highest doctrine of Man and the most comprehensive and beautiful revelation of our intended destiny.

No other Faith claim gets anywhere near this and it is difficult to see how such an extraordinary scenario could be merely the invention of human wishful thinking.

The only decision to make is whether we take up the option of being incorporated in the Crucified, Risen, Ascended and Glorified Body of Christ or opt for the 'disposal plant' theories of debased modernity. The former option is only available in a Faith which acknowledges and witnesses the Real Presence and the living encounter with this Lord.

If it is not true, as St Paul says, we are the most foolish people and to be pitied. But Paul knows that, because we have the highest doctrine of both the human and the divine and a long record of that supreme encounter, his case is sure, his conclusions are safe.

Indeed, as the Resurrection of the Dead is clear and the salvation in Christ the only way to embrace this colossal and undeserved destiny, foolishness and regret and pitiable misery are the lot of those who reject the fundamental truth of the Gospel.

That is why the Gospel remains, always and everywhere, urgent and glorious, liberating and the source of unending joy.

As the Easter proclamation has it: Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed.

Hallelujah.