



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

3rd Sunday of Easter – Year C

Do you love me?

Readings: Acts 5: 27-32, 40-41, Ps 29, Ap 5: 11-14, John 21: 1-19

‘Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?’

I intone each morning to the bathroom reflection. Increasingly, and to my growing chagrin, the once reliable and now wretched object comes back with a deeply unsatisfactory answer. It’s obviously faulty.

As a member of that generation which seized on every occasion to express its self-love and increasingly desperate affirmation, I am in a kind of existential crisis. If the answer is not ‘ME’, then who?

After all, even the Golden Rule – love your neighbour as yourself - has been dragooned into supporting this concept of self-glorification.

You have to love yourself before you can truly love your neighbour – we have been catechised by a rogue theology.

This, we are unreliably informed, is the basis of all that we do. Our priority is self-indulgence – because ‘WE ARE WORTH IT’.

The great thing about error or heresy is not that it is completely untrue but rather that it contains sufficient truth to lead us to its perverse and lying conclusion.

We are, it is true, made in the Image of God and that, albeit sin obscured reflection, is part of the basis of our hope in Christ. But that we deserve

the very best and indeed are the very best is at the very heart of the Luciferian betrayal of the truth, rebellion against God and spectacular fall from grace.

It is true that we need to have confidence, a confidence that is born of love but that can never be a self- confidence, a self love, but must rather be a 'con fide', an absolute trust in God. A 'with faith' in his eternal verity and love, not a pagan glorification of fallen Man by creating gods made in our image and worshipping them.

Two things recently reminded me of this danger.

One was a very funny but, for me, chilling interlude on the recent pilgrimage to Lourdes. Unbeknown to me the team had taken a photo of me to a printer and had a copy of it made into masks for each of them to wear as a practical joke. Thus on Fancy Dress party night they all appeared in costume with my face on theirs. It was, at once, very funny and very chastening. The sight of nothing but myself endlessly repeated seemed to me nothing short of a vision and foretaste of Hell, a never ending 'selfie' obscuring everything else. Terrifying.

The second is today's Gospel. Jesus and the disciples reunited, post-Resurrection, on the Galilee shoreline. We are privy to the conversation between Jesus and Peter. Peter, the rock on which Jesus will build His Church, has a lot of ground to make up in this relationship after his shattering denial of Christ and the accusatory cockcrow over the Gallicantu.

ROCK? He has been more like meringue than masonry. Self love and self preservation have been the guiding lights of his witness thus far. So Jesus asks him: - DO YOU LOVE ME?

Peter's answer is deeply compromised. He does not reply with the Powerful word for love that Jesus employs. Instead he mumbles the equivalent of 'I like you.'

We all know that it is very difficult for men to say 'I love you' even to the woman in their life. The woman will see such a declaration as a vital milestone on the way to faithfulness and permanence, security, home building, going deeper etc.

For a man to say it to another man, albeit Jesus, is truly shocking and costly.

So Christ persists....Do you love me?

And Peter responds with that same evasion – I like you a lot.

It is, of course, the question which we too have to answer at the end of all our betrayals and evasions and self-love.

Confidence in ourselves is utterly misplaced unless it is built on confidence in God and such a personal conceit will inevitably fail.

The answer to the shoreline question will be the test of our confidence in Him who alone can save us and raise us up. Jesus doesn't want to know if we like Him but if we LOVE Him. Anything else is subterfuge and evasion.

So, for a spiritual exercise this week, find a quiet place and moment and, when you have settled your heart, focus on Him and hear that question put clearly to you in the still dawn air of the Galilee shoreline where your journey began.

Jesus asks me once again, 'DO YOU LOVE ME?'

Well, do I?