



The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary 2026

Homily by Fr Robbie Low

Readings: Apocalypse 11:19a;12:1-6a,10ab, Ps 45, 1 Corinthians 15:20-27, Luke 1: 39-56

If you don't have SKY this may not mean much to you but I am a regular viewer of a long running series, on their Atlantic channel, called 'Blue Bloods'.

It is fundamentally a 'cop show' – but with a considerable difference.

The stories revolve around the Reagan Family who, it would seem, virtually run the law industry. in New York.

The Grandpa, long -widowed, was Commissioner of New York Police Dept. in the days when a 'wood shampoo' solved most street crime or disorder. The present Commissioner, also widowed, is played by the huge imposing unit of Tom Sellick, as a kind of avuncular but thoughtful and sharp- witted walrus with the weight of the world on his shoulders in an antinomian culture which is authority averse.

He has a daughter, a divorcee, complete with teenage daughter, who is Assistant and prospective Attorney General.

He has two sons, one a streetwise Iraq veteran toughie with a heart of gold, also widowed in a gang reprisal, and one a Harvard Law graduate who has opted to be a beat copper and work his way up while marrying the cop who was his partner and who comes from the other side of the tracks.

The third son was a cop killed in the line of duty.

The extraordinary thing about the Reagans is that, being of Irish stock, they are all Catholics AND they all believe AND they all still go and say their prayers. Mass and confession are a given. AND... They all always have Sunday lunch together and they always say Grace! The lunch provides an opportunity for them to discuss the moral issues that are confronting each of them in their current cases. It is beautifully and powerfully done and almost unique in advertising the virtues of the Faith, the importance of the family and the devastating cost of the popular but failed alternatives to the Gospel.

In a recent episode Tom Sellick was confronted by the shocking reality that one of his most courageous beat officers was the son of the gangster who killed his own beloved son, Joe, all those years ago. At the denouement of that episode, Commissioner Reagan says this :-

‘The fundamental divide between us is not who worships what God or who salutes what flag but between those who have lost a child and those who have not’.

It rang all sorts of bells with me, even if the word ‘loss’ fails to give a full account of the scale of the disaster and life changing effect of such a tragedy.

When your child dies, it usurps the natural order of things.

They are supposed to bear our bodies to the grave, not the other way round.

Nor does it matter at what age this occurs. I vividly recall comforting a saintly ninety year old who had just heard of the death of her sixty seven year old son. Pensioner he may have been but he would always be her baby.

For most people the ‘loss’ is less public. The pregnant mother miscarries. Even this word implies the failure, in some way, of the would-be bearer of life. She would not be able to talk about it. The kindly advice was usually, ‘It’s quite common, love. Give yourself a few months

and try again.' The 'episode' would not be mentioned again and the loneliness of a real bereavement was the mother's alone to endure.

I was on a train journey many, many years ago and sat next to an attractive woman in her late thirties/early forties. We got talking 'family'. I asked her how many children she had. 'Three', she replied. Then she paused and corrected herself. 'Actually four', she said emphatically.

And she spent the rest of the journey telling me about the very late 'miscarriage' she had suffered and the importance of that child. She spoke quietly, gently but passionately about the real relationship she had with her unborn child *in utero* and the continuing awareness of that part of her family who was not there - and of whom she was no longer able to talk, except to a stranger on the train, without being thought to be having some unreasonable mental disturbance.

There is, for most women, in this situation (and for some men too) a deep and hidden sorrow that has not been healed.

It is also a fact that, the figures being what they are, that for every involuntary miscarriage, there is a chosen, however reluctantly, voluntary termination of life and with it the consequences of both that tragedy and the long -term guilt of the ultimate betrayal of trust.

For the radical feminist, abortion may be almost an article of faith and an assertion of materialist dogma over their common humanity, but I have been around long enough to know that it is desperate evasion of reality and that you can't buck the biology.

In either case, voluntary or involuntary, for all their huge differences, both are sources of deep sorrow and in need of recognition, healing, restoration and reconciliation.

It is widely assumed that, because of the Church's unbending stance on Life issues, that it is the last place a soul in such a case would come to seek help and hope. The truth, brothers and sisters, is that it is the **only** place where a soul tortured by that loss of life and future and love and hope can turn.

First of all because, whether the 'loss' was voluntary or involuntary, the Church (and I speak of the Catholic Church alone here because most of the others have either collaborated with the philosophy of the culture of

death or utterly lack the sacramental tools to mend the hearts and lives of those in this secret anguish) the Catholic Church alone is the place where the reality of that unborn but utterly real human being is recognised. And, in today's Gospel of the Visitation, we have a key proof text of that truth.

Second, because the Church alone holds the keys to the mysteries of life and death. Her very existence is predicated upon the relationship between this mortal life and the futurity and destiny of the soul. She alone can reconnect the broken bond and assure the sorrowful of the possibility of real communion.

Third, because the Church alone is able to assure the sorrowful of their deepest hope and longing and, where guilt is acknowledged in the case of voluntary loss, provide the healing of absolution.

Where guilt does not apply, as in the case of involuntary loss, the Church alone can give real assurance of that liberating reality - for innocent people often still blame themselves.

Too often the Church, because of her heroic battle for the defence of the innocent, is caricatured as simply 'uncaring' or 'judgemental' towards women. But, let us be clear, brothers and sisters, while our language is strident in condemning the culture of death, our words are always gentle and compassionate towards its victims.

We must never forget that we are here primarily for the salvation of souls and to spread the word and reality of God's love in Christ.

Briefly then...how does this work in pastoral and sacramental practice?

When a woman (or responsible man) comes to talk about their loss, the first thing they need to know that it is not 'game over'.

I suggest that, if we are talking 'unborn' here that, if they have not done so, they name that child. This is an important gift of identity and parenthood and, indeed, how we really know one another. It is a declaration of the reality of the person and the fact of relationship.

I encourage them to pray quietly in their hearts over the next few days for the child by name.

If they are responsible for that loss of life then they would naturally come to the confessional where the Sacrament can grant them such an

absolution that alone can reconcile them not only with God, whose gift they mistakenly rejected, but also with the very gift of that child itself. It is a moment of glorious and lasting liberation.

Then it is important to arrange a private requiem for that child. There is no greater gift we can offer in love and reconciliation than Christ's sacrifice on the Cross for our sins and for the salvation of souls. To offer this for the child we have loved and seemed to have lost is a moment of supreme and heavenly beauty.

In following this simple pattern of love and reconciliation, we may entreat and be assured of the accompanying prayers of Our Blessed Mother who, at the foot of the Cross, saw her only Son, through no sin of her own or His, taken from her and then restored in Life. This is the life that knows no end and by which miracle of Grace is restored the eternal destiny of Fallen Man.

Our Lady, above all, knows the sorrows of our heart and, by her glorious Assumption, the prospect of our redemption, our reconciliation and our restoration. Let us make sure that the world knows the true extent of her son, Jesus Christ's amazing love in this most profound matter and encourage the broken-hearted to come to Him in the sacraments of grace to be healed.