

Sermon for Sunday 8th August (Trinity 10) 2021

'Does familiarity breed contempt?' from Fr. Mike

- 2 Sam 18.5-9,15,31-33; Psalm 130; Ephesians 4.25-5.2
- **John 6. 35, 41-55**

⁴¹ The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.⁴² And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?⁴³ Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, **Murmur not among yourselves.**⁴⁴ No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.⁴⁶ Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.⁴⁷ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.⁴⁸ I am that bread of life.⁴⁹ Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.⁵⁰ This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Remember 'Sue-bo'? In 2009, Susan Boyle (at the age of 47) from a small unpronounceable village in Scotland, entered the stage like a galleon in full sail. She appeared the most unlikely candidate to be successful at 'Britain's Got Talent', the show where all kinds of people seek to pursue their dreams to be recognised and adored. However, nothing is ever quite what it seems. From the moment she appeared on stage, the majority of people were sceptical and guided by their prejudices. Most laughed, scoffed, made fun, jeered, and almost instinctively rejected her. Next, she was briefly 'interviewed' by the panel of three 'professional' judges, who also scarcely stifled their disbelief when she announced she wished to become as famous as the renowned singer, Elaine Paige. The stage was set for ritual humiliation on live television, and in front of the whole nation.

A short, anxious pause followed as we awaited her musical backing track to begin... Eventually, she opened her mouth and began to sing. The sound that issued was wonderfully counter intuitive – how could this be? The voice of an angel did not match what visually stood before us, as she dramatically sang ‘*I dreamed a dream*’ from Alain Boublil’s hit musical based on Victor Hugo’s classic novel ‘*Les Misérables*’

‘I dreamed a dream in time gone by
When hope was high and life worth living
I dreamed that love would never die
I prayed that God would be forgiving...’ (see below)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yE1Lxw5ZyXk>

So, in less than two minutes, this unlikely lady astounded the nation with her quirky personality and gifted voice. People were immediately forced to review their original opinion in the light of this glorious and revelational experience.

In today’s gospel, there is an equally powerful wake-up call. Their personal knowledge of Jesus made the people sceptical about his claims (v.44, 47, 48, & 51). The assumption was – he was just a fellow Galilean, and because his family was known to them, and was from the ‘wrong side of the track’ to boot (‘lowly Nazareth’ of all places) this person could not possibly have come from heaven!

Is our sense of awe and wonder today equally blunted by familiarity?

Please ponder the following: At the moment I am invited twice weekly to the Eucharistic table, to eat the bread of eternal life. Do I approach that table with apathy or with a quickening heart?

When were my eyes last opened and when did I last recognise Christ in the breaking of the bread? Jesus (the Christ) is appealing to us to be aware of the divine relationships that underpin our lives.

More is going on than we realise: we are being made into the daughters and sons of God! There is much more to each one of us than meets the eye, no matter how poorly we are responding.

God the Father is always drawing us into divine life, because he loves us unconditionally. He does this through Jesus who is one like us, and who tells us what the Father has in mind for us. So, there are divine 'Persons' (as Father, Son and Holy Spirit) busy in our lives, enabling us to become like themselves. All we need in order to 'qualify' is an open mind and a thankful heart. It is humbling and wonderful to note, that if we simply live within these intimate relationships, we are actually already sharing in eternal life! (v.51) If you wish to experience the truth, then '**Murmur not among yourselves**' (v.43). Those who continually reject the truth may find that God will judicially harden their hearts by allowing them to actually believe their own delusion. For those who refused to believe His teaching, Jesus made the truth more obscure by means of parables.

As we continue to emerge (tentatively) from Covid pandemic, with all the daily surprises and challenges still connected with it, we are both reassured and sanctified by that heavenly and changeless sustenance - Familiar bread, which is The Eternal Body, given '**for the life of the world**'. I pray we neither squander nor refuse this unique and sacred opportunity to recognise (and ultimately imbibe) the divine presence for our individual comfort and common mission. Amen!

Fr. Mike (8th August 2021)