

Low Sunday, 28th April 2019

When you hear “Quasimodo”, I can guess what you are thinking... a hunchback by chance? I know that Notre Dame Cathedral, for a rather unfortunate reason, has been in the news recently, yet we really have to get behind this rather unusual name to find its real meaning. I know that I don't usually quote Victor Hugo, though it is perhaps best that the novelist himself explains why his character is so named. The priest who found the deformed abandoned baby at Notre Dame (quote): “called him Quasimodo; whether it was that he chose thereby to commemorate the day when he had found him, or that he meant to mark by that name how incomplete and imperfectly molded the poor little creature was” (end of quote).

Today in fact is Quasimodo, the Sunday after Easter Sunday. This Sunday has a variety of titles: Low Sunday, *Dominica in albis depositis*, Divine Mercy Sunday, but Quasimodo Sunday perhaps less so. This is certainly not the case, however, in the country in South America that I have just been to over Easter (for work, that is, rather than for a holiday!): Chile. Today is known there as “*La Fiesta de Cuasimodo*”, in which Holy Communion is taken to the old and infirm who could not get to Mass on Easter Sunday. This though is no ordinary sick visit: the Blessed Sacrament, a bit like at Corpus Christi, is carried in procession.

The tradition, in fact, is that the priest is escorted by cowboys, *huasos* (not your Wild West types exactly), guarding the Blessed Sacrament. The priest, in Spanish colonial times (two hundred years ago and more), was in danger of being attacked by marauding bandits eager to steal the precious metal containing the Sacrament. Some of the present-day cowboys still go on horseback, and I was told that you can get hundreds of horses in just one procession. The horses, however, are of course not ‘the stars of the show’, and anyway it is certainly not a ‘show’ but rather an expression of devotion to Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament, as well as of charity towards the sick.



The Church in Chile has not some bad press of late, so it is somewhat encouraging to remember people's love and devotion to Our Lord. Today is called "Quasimodo" Sunday because, like Gaudete and Laetare (in Advent and Lent respectively), that is the first word (or rather words) in the Latin of the Introit, the Entrance Antiphon, for the Mass: "*Quasi* (Almost) *modo* (like)". And what or who is "Almost like" (forgetting for a moment that the hunchback may have also been so called because he was, to quote Hugo yet again: an "incomplete and imperfectly molded [...] poor little creature. Indeed, Quasimodo, one-eyed, hunchbacked, and bow-legged, could hardly be considered as anything more than an *almost*")? – "Almost like newborn babes, desire the spiritual milk without guile" (1 P 2:2) – it is us: baptised, though by now grown-up, babies – we are Quasimodo!

And (another question) what, or perhaps who, is this "spiritual milk without guile"? – Carry on reading this same chapter (chapter two) of the First Epistle of St Peter, and you will find the following answer: Christ "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 P 2:22). Christ is "without guile", and he is indeed also our "spiritual" food and drink – What, or rather who, is taken to those receiving Holy Communion?