



32nd Week of the Year 10 November 2024

Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

La Notte di Luce – The Night of Light

This week a friend sent me a post on TikTok: a short video of a celebration entitled La Notte di Luce – The Night of Light which takes place on 31 October (Halloween) in Naples. I noted the huge number of people, especially young adults, singing with joy of their Faith in Jesus the Rock. One poster said: “Jesus is Alive”, another “No to Halloween”. The lighted candles they held high reminded me of the Processions in Lourdes and Fatima. What a different message this proclaims rather than what is happening at Halloween: it proclaimed our Faith in the triumph of light and hope over darkness and fear which is the substance of Halloween’s dressing up in weird witch like costumes. A friend was telling me about the increase in sales of books on witchcraft, and books with witchcraft recipes to ward off evil spirits; much of this is associated with death and darkness rather than life and light, which we celebrate in November.

On Sunday last I celebrated Mass at St Francis, Baddesley Clinton, and the Mass was a Memorial for a deceased person on the occasion of his Birthday. The whole family was there: the prayer was for his eternal repose in the arms of Our Lord. This week we had the Annual Mass for deceased bishops, priests and deacons of the Diocese: we had Mass in the Chapel at Oscott College and then processed to the Cemetery for prayers and blessing at the graves. One of the Hymns we sang was “Jerusalem the Golden”. The final verse runs like this:

O sweet and blessed country,
the home of God’s elect!
O sweet and blessed country
that eager hearts expect!
Jesus, in mercy brings us
to that dear land of rest;
who art, with God the Father
and Spirit, ever blest.

During the Sundays of November visits will be made to cemeteries across the Archdiocese: Priests and Deacons with parishioners will pray there at graves of loved ones now departed, including those who no longer have relatives to be there for them.

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Graves are blessed with holy water and a prayer such as this from the Book of Blessings is said:

Almighty God and Father,
by the mystery of the cross, you have made
us strong;
by the sacrament of the resurrection
you have sealed us as your own.
Look kindly upon your servants
now freed from the bonds of mortality,
and count them among your saints in Heaven.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **R. Amen**

The content of the Gospel for the 32nd Sunday continues to be the mounting tension between Jesus and the Jewish authorities. The Temple in Jerusalem was the centre of Jewish worship in the time of Jesus. It was expected that observant Jews would make a financial offering to the temple treasury. As we would expect to be the case, Jesus observes that those who were rich contributed large sums to the treasury. A similar situation exists in most of our parishes as well. Jesus calls attention however to a poor widow's offering for his disciples consideration, commending her because her small offering was an act of profound generosity, giving from her livelihood rather than her surplus. The Loyola Commentary points out: *"To give from her livelihood is not only an act of generosity, it is also an act of trust in God. We can only give from our need if we trust that God will provide for us, Jesus himself describes the ultimate act of generosity and trust in God as he gives his life for us on the cross."*

This was the occasion on which Jesus spoke of the temple being destroyed and a new temple, not made with human hands being raised on its place. For us Jesus would give all as we read in the letter to the Hebrews on the 32nd Sunday, an action prefigured by the widow in the Gospel. Christ becomes the cornerstone and we the living stones of that temple *"still being built out of the substance of our lives"* says Fr Ferlita in his commentary. He continues: *"not just money given, but time and energy and skills and love, good words and good actions. Any offering made to God involves an offering of self; and God will multiply it, as he did for the widow of Zarephath to the glory of his name"*

Following the floods in Valencia Spain, on the media, you may have missed the way the Faithful have opened the Churches to the victims: there you see the truth that "Jesus is Alive" in action. With Pope Francis we pray to Our Lady of the Forsaken, Patroness of Valencia, for the people. That is a small offering, building the new Temple that is the Church: Jesus is Alive, and when he returns a second time it will be *"to reward with salvation those who are waiting for him"* (Hebrews 9:28).

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