



Reflection 14th Week of the Year 5 / 6 July
by Mgr Daniel McHugh

The Golden Rule

Recently, a friend who had been reading a book by Dale Carnegie on Kindle, recommended it to me. It is called “How to stop Worrying and Start Living”. I hasten to add I am not a “worrier” to any great extent, but I was keen to make a start on Kindle which a number of my friends use and I’ve been a bit behind. I pride myself in the situation of lockdown on using technology to keep in touch and develop new ways of communication!

In the context of concern about “Jobs”, so much in the news this past week, this book is proving to be an interesting read. Dale Carnegie, as you may know, is one of the world’s great authors hitting the top of the charts for books sold on a number of occasions over the years. He came from a poor family in Missouri in the United States, and his personal story, grew in the situation of poverty and lack of productive employment, especially for his father. Interestingly, the backdrop to the book is the great depression in the USA (1929-1933) and the New Deal of President Roosevelt referred to by Prime Minister Boris Johnson in his speech focussing on jobs in this week just gone.

A very interesting section in the book is about the depression his Father suffered, even thinking of suicide, in the situation of abject poverty. And, the worry endured by his mother and the whole family. You can’t help feeling that many families across the land are facing such prospects today. One vivid story remaining in my mind is of his Father contemplating suicide as he crossed a river, and the power of his Mother’s Faith that in the end God would see them through, which resulted in his Father binding himself to her in the crisis. And, God indeed did see them through! They had a family who gathered in prayer, reading the Scripture. Carnegie recalls the reading of John 14 “There are many rooms in my Father’s House” and their singing “What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear”. A favourite of mine.

I found myself thinking of the story in relation to the reading from the Gospel for this 14th Sunday of the Year, where Jesus says “Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.”

I wonder how many people baulk at this at first sight, thinking I have enough to carry already! However, there is a different way of looking at these words of Our Lord. This comes out in the Homilies of Fr McBride “Seeds for the Soul”.

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I am old enough to remember going to Ireland in the summer holiday and seeing ploughing where 2 horses pulled the plough with the yoke holding them together, so sharing the burden of pulling the heavy plough to cut the soil in furrows. McBride, quite rightly, sees the yoke as enabling us to travel in life with Jesus alongside us, making the burden lighter. In the case of the Carnegies, the mother made Jesus incarnate alongside her husband, and so made his heavy burden possible to bear. Her union with Jesus was forged in prayer. Her husband who thought of suicide at 41 did not die until he was 89. She was the one who bound him to Jesus, who walked alongside him in very difficult times.

It would be great to be able to communicate this to non-believers. Perhaps, we have to start with ourselves though: renewing what our journey is all about, binding ourselves to the Lord in prayer, confident that it is with Him that we can come through.

St Paul in the second reading encourages to remember that Christ has made His home in us, and he can give us new life.

This past week, I have seen a woman join with friends in prayer for her husband who is sick. And, I have seen her friends put “their arms around her”, to embrace her and support her spiritually. “It works, we are a spiritual people”, a point made by Carnegie in his book and he calls this “The Golden Rule” of life, though he does not set out to preach, but to tell us how to cope with worry.

I must conclude with Pope Emeritus Benedict, whose brother Father Georg has died. He has written many famous books in Theology, but my journalist friend in Rome said in an interview, that none of them communicated what our Faith is all about better than the day Benedict, himself in a wheelchair, flew home to put his arms round his brother and visit his parents’ grave.

If you wonder what you must do to share your Faith in Jesus, that may be the image to remember!

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