

## Reflection for Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020

*'And everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children or land for the sake of my name will be repaid a hundred times over and also to inherit eternal life.'* (Mt 19:29)

On Saturday of this week we celebrate the feast of St Benedict, the founder of monasticism and one of the patrons of Europe. He established the Rule which would become the norm for thousands of monks and nuns from the 6<sup>th</sup> century right up to the present day. His Rule also formed the basis for our democratic society and the rule of law which enables us all to live together harmoniously. It is mainly because of the way St Benedict's rule was lived out in the monasteries that Europe was established as a Christian continent and why there are many churches and monasteries in most parts of Europe. You will know this if you have ever toured round Europe.

The Rule of St Benedict is based on the gospel and the quotation above from St Matthew's gospel sums it up, to leave everything and follow Jesus will bring many rewards and ultimately eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. The Rule carefully integrates the life of prayer, specifically the Divine Office, with manual labour and the study of scripture and theology. Hospitality is very important and each guest who arrives at the monastery is to be welcomed as if it is Christ himself. In medieval times the monastery provided health care and education for the poor and many social services which are now carried out by the state.

Although Europe as a continent has a wonderful Christian heritage the practice of the faith has seriously declined in the last 50 years. This became obvious after the mysterious fire which engulfed Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris to the point where people weren't quite sure what to call it, was it just an historical building, a centre for French culture and identity, a museum? Hardly anyone in the media called it a cathedral or referred to it as a living and vibrant place of Catholic worship.

A big part of the reason for this uncertainty is the rise of secularism, relativism, atheism and consumerism. All these 'isms have succeeded in pushing God and the Faith to the edge of society and to eliminate God from the culture. We have some responsibility for this process too because of the failures in the Church, particularly scandals and a widespread ignorance of the basic truths of the Faith in recent times. Our knowledge and understanding of the Faith should give us the confidence to resist the aggressive march of this culture of death.

We need to pray to St Benedict that through his intercession we will experience a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that we can reach out to those who have lapsed from the faith and to those who do not know about the love of God and salvation through Jesus Christ his only Son. We pray for all the countries of Europe, especially our own and our nearest neighbour Ireland, that we may recover a sense of our Christian heritage and return to the Faith handed down to us by our forefathers, a faith which will bring the joy, peace and love of God our Father poured into hearts through the sacraments of His Church. May the Lord bless us and Our Lady protect us.

Deacon Kevin