



Reflection 22nd Week of the Year 30/31 August 2020
by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it”

This past week I visited Yorkshire with a friend, coming back through Lincolnshire. We were blessed to be able to visit Lincoln Cathedral for Evening Prayer on Thursday 27 August, the Feast of St Monica, the mother of St Augustine. The great Theologian, whose Feast was Friday 28th. The story of Monica is well known: how she had longed for her son to follow the Way of Jesus in his life. But, he lived a dissolute life as a young man, fathering a child out of wedlock. She bore the Cross of many mothers, seeing her hopes and prayers disappointed. However, she did not give up: she continued her prayer for him and even followed him to Italy from where he went to Milan to pursue his academic career. There he was converted and gave his life to Christ, encouraged by the great St. Ambrose of Milan.

We are speaking of the 300s and here we were in an Anglican Cathedral where statues of the Saints, were torn down at the Reformation, remembering this great woman, wife and mother, who really knew what carrying the Cross was, the focus of today's Gospel.

St Peter, whose choice as the Rock on which the Church to be built, we reflected on last Sunday, found it hard to believe that the Way of Jesus would lead to the Cross. Jesus says to him today “the way you think is not God's way but man's.” None of us like the Crosses that are part of our life of Faith.

The great Prophet Jeremiah is presented in the first reading today, as one who had to suffer for his faithfulness to God. He suffered so much derision for speaking his truth, that he says of God in the reading today “I used to say “I will not think about him, I will not speak in his name anymore”. But, then he goes on “There seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, impassioned in my bones”. In the end, he could not renege on his commitment to be the Prophet of God.

We all find this pain of living in the Way of Jesus difficult, remaining true to his call is not easy.

You may recall that Peter later set out on his mission to preach the Good News of Jesus, going first to Antioch and then on to Rome. I like to tell the story of Peter trying to escape the persecution of Christians, heading out of Rome on the Via

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Appia and meeting an apparition of Jesus on the way in to Rome. The spot is called “Domine, Quo Vadis”. Peter saying to Jesus “Lord, where are you going?” And Jesus answering: I am going into Rome to be crucified again. Peter turned round and went back into Rome where he died a Martyr’s death for witnessing to Jesus.

I have found in my own life, as I am sure you do too, that embracing the Cross, like St Monica, rather than running from it, is the way to life. For that reason, in St George and St Teresa, I had a Calvary erected outside the Church, marking the Centenary, to place this central mystery of our Faith before us as a reminder, and a witness to others.

It is not an easy way: we are very attracted by our “consumer” society, enjoying material things to the exclusion of the spiritual. St Paul encourages us in the reading from the Romans “not to model ourselves on the world around (us) but to let our behaviour change, modelled by (our) new mind.”

The famous Augustine wrote “our hearts will not rest until they rest in thee.” His mother Monica died before she could return to North Africa where her home was. Her relics are in the St Augustine’s Church in Rome. On Thursday, Pope Francis went to pray before the Altar, reminding us that the mother who prayed and suffered for her son, chose the best way, the Way highlighted in the words of Jesus today

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29 August 2020

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