



2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Easter 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> April 2023 – Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

***“What must we do brother?”***

I was struck by these words in the Acts of the Apostles [2:36-41] at Mass on Tuesday this week. I reflected briefly with the congregation at Our Lady of the Wayside, Shirley, that on Easter Sunday I put forward evidence from the accounts of the empty tomb and the appearances [some use the word showings] of Jesus after his death and burial that convinced the Apostles and Disciples of his Resurrection from the Dead. Now, the Readings at Mass take on the reality of the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus, but at the same time how this experience led the witnesses to a new way of life. Hence my focus on Tuesday on those words from those who heard Peter and the Apostles proclaim that Jesus who was crucified had risen from the dead: *“What must we do?”* In other words how should this impact on us?

We have been living through a fascinating time particularly this past week with the celebrations surrounding 25 years of the Good Friday Agreement in the North of Ireland. Personally I was touched by it in a special way as my mother was from a Protestant family in the North and she married Dad, a Catholic from the South. I was born in Birmingham. The Peace Agreement that was reached 25 years ago was a cause of great celebration. We can only imagine the important role John Hume, a committed Catholic Politician played in the negotiations.

The focus this week on the occasion of the President of the US visit was on what must be done to build on the Peace that has been achieved. Here, as he was speaking to young people at the University, he highlighted their role; for the futures; they especially, are the ones to whom the task of building the peace for the future falls.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter I am baptising a young girl aged 7 from a Hong Kong family. Both parents will be baptised soon too; they all enrolled on the First Sunday of Lent, but she is going earlier so that she can be part of the First Holy Communion Programme this Spring/Summer. The family are moving forward in the same way that those who first heard proclamation of the Risen Jesus did. When they asked *“What are we to do?”* Peter answered *“You must repent and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”*.

In the case of the Disciples of Jesus - we read in the Chapter 20 of St John for the Second Sunday of Easter - they are being sent by Jesus just as the Father had sent Him. They are to continue His mission, building the Kingdom, proclaiming the Good News, and for the Disciples a specific task of forgiveness of sin. When we were invited to renew our Baptismal Vows on Easter Sunday we were reminded of our part in continuing to build

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the Kingdom of God through our witness in word and action. There is a custom in the Church of taking the name of a Saint at our Baptism, someone whose life of Faith can be an example and inspiration in our own journey. In the case of Lok Yu Cheung the Saint chosen by her and her family is St Hermione of Ephesus, a place in present-day Turkey, where St John lived and where Mary the Mother of Jesus went after His Resurrection. Hermione was the daughter of St Philip the Deacon who, you may remember, baptised the Ethiopian as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Hermione went to Ephesus to assist St John only to find he had already died. There she founded a Hospital, and then met the fate of so many Christians at that stage in the Roman Empire. On refusing to deny her Faith she was beheaded by the Emperor. What a wonderful choice St Hermione is: please God “Renee” a family name for Lok Yu will be inspired by her and be one of those young people building a better world like the young people at the University in Belfast.

For all of us Easter time is a time of renewal and challenge: a special time to give thanks for our calling and the opportunity this season gives us to begin afresh, to rebuild our mission through the Church. We are reminded in the Gospel of forgiveness of sin, and so the door is open to all of us to be part of building a better future.

As it is Divine Mercy Sunday I conclude with these words of St Faustina which have been quoted at the end of the Stations of the Cross in Walsingham, the National Shrine of Our Lady:

***“You expired, Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls, and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelop the whole world and empty yourself out upon us. O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of Mercy for us, I trust in You.”***

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