



All Saints and All Souls: 1 and 2 November 2020

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

Everyone is invited to the Feast

Often stories of Saints have been so far from real life that there is no way you could imagine them being an inspiration to people living today. I think, it is not so much that they were not real people with faults and failings, but those writing about them felt they had to conjure up a hagiography that left out all blemishes. Happily, we have moved on and it is encouraging for all us today to be able to think of those who lived lives of extraordinary sanctity, as also people like us with human failings.

I have been reading about the young Carlo Acutis who was declared “Blessed” just a few weeks ago in Assisi. He was clearly an extraordinary young boy who played like any other youngster and loved his computer. His teacher speaks of his life (he died of leukemia aged 15) and how much he was part of school life and fun. At the same time, he had a wonderful Faith in the Holy Eucharist writing “Standing before the Eucharistic Christ we become Holy”, and enjoyed a tremendous inner life of prayer, saying once “Jesus speaks to us within and we should listen to Him and follow Him in everything”. You can imagine his inspiring young people to think about their priorities in life, even to using computers to further knowledge of their Faith.

For those of us who are older, I would suggest there are a number of people who inspire us in our Journey of Faith. One of the most outstanding for me is Pope Francis. We have had extraordinary Popes in my lifetime and Francis certainly speaks to the world in which we live. The Gospel passage for All Saints is from St Matthew Chapter 5, the Beatitudes. They are intended to be the way of life we all strive for, but when you take them really seriously they involve risk; They really hit home and can result in criticism. That is something Francis has experienced both in terms of his reaching out to migrants, and this past week or two his comments on LGBT way of life. We shouldn’t be surprised at what he says: after all he is the one who called for the “Year of Mercy”. As a priest living in the West in these days, I was so happy to hear him advocate a more Pastoral Approach to broken marriages, a few years ago, but some people criticised him for this fearing he was undermining the Sacrament of Marriage. In fact, the year before last he went to Ireland for the “World Day of the Family”, and has spoken often of Marriage as the Sacrament of Union between Man and Woman. At his Public Audiences, young couples are often invited forward for special attention and Blessing.

The recent documentary, “Francesco”, premiered in Rome on 21st October has him speaking about Homosexual and Gay Partnerships, and of course this makes headlines in these days when those in Civil Union have moved on to what is called “Gay Marriage”. For Pope Francis marriage is always between a man and woman; he is against same sex marriage. But, he sees the reality and says those in stable unions (such as gays) have a right to legal protections to ensure matters regarding inheritance, health care and so on;

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hence he would advocate a law protecting civil living together, often referred to as civil unions, but he would not see this as marriage. He also speaks of the “right to a family” which is not about adoptions, but about the fact that sometimes young people living this way are disowned by their families, as was the case in Argentina.

Does the Pope make mistakes? I would say rather he takes risks, and that can get you into trouble! The Church is not about being afraid of taking risks because of how words/actions may be perceived in the media. The wonderful Encyclical “Fratelli Tutti”, is similarly pushing out the boat, in the area of human fraternity, having its roots in the joint document agreed with the grand Imam of Cairo’s Al-Azhar Institute in Egypt. We are all brothers and sisters whatever our Race or Faith: that is the basis of a future together on this planet; a future of Peace, a future all Faiths must work for.

On the Feast of All Saints, we too are challenged to live the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as we commemorate all the Faithful Departed on 2 November and share memories of our loved ones, it is nice to see ways in which they strove to live them too. Like me pointing, to “Mercy” in the life of Pope Francis, I am sure you will see one or other of the Beatitudes reflected in the lives of those you pray may enter the fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven; “Everyone is invited to the Feast” said Pope Francis the other Sunday, speaking of the King inviting everyone to the Banquet for his son’s wedding in the Gospel Parable. One of the readings for All Souls Day is taken from St John’s Gospel Chapter 11:17-27 the Raising of Lazarus where Jesus says: “I am the Resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes me will never die.” Words that reassure us as we remember our beloved departed.

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