



16th Week of Ordinary Time: 18th /19th July 2021

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

**“Through [Jesus] both of us have in the one Spirit our way to come to the Father”
(Ephesians 2:18)**

“Hatred will never win” was the sentiment of Jadon Sancho, one of the England football team who suffered racial abuse on social media this week when he missed a penalty at the European Cup final. Marcus Rashford had his image on public display in his home area defaced: this was the young man who did so much to ensure free school meals for the young people living in poverty during the Pandemic. A good deal of shock and anger at what has happened came to the surface in Parliament during the week.

At various times the Church has spoken out on racism too, most recently in March 2021 urging Catholic organisations and institutions to review themselves and “look again at how they could better serve minority ethnic communities in our society” (cf Catholic Association for Racial Justice). This was in response to the Parliamentary Report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities.

Could we be party to such discrimination? Obviously, we are going to say “no, we want no part in this”, but we need to examine ourselves at a deeper level.

I expect many of us have been shocked to hear about discoveries of unmarked graves of indigenous children in Canada. The Catholic Church and other Churches were part of the residential school system, which ended in the 1970s, a national program that tried to integrate these children and are said to have denied them their cultural heritage and language.

We can so easily as individuals and a community become part of what Pope Francis calls “ideological colonization” – terminology that needs further unpacking, but in this context we are very conscious that Aboriginal people were looked down upon. And, we all have that tendency: we need to think of ourselves as better than everyone else; it makes us feel more comfortable, I suppose!

The continuing reading from the letter to the Ephesians for the 16th Sunday helps us to see where we are coming from as Catholic Christians. The author is dealing with the reality of division in those days too – between Jew and Gentile – the two are made one by Christ who breaks down “the dividing wall of enmity” for “through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father”.

When Pope St John Paul II went to Canada he said this in an address affirming the dignity of First Nations Peoples: “By coming among you I have wished to underline your dignity as native peoples”. The Colonial approach as we know was not always respectful of the native peoples in the past. And, that mentality now ideologically grounded – not

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



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respecting people, their culture and beliefs – we experience as Catholics today when we try to stand up for example for our beliefs in the sanctity of life and the beauty of marriage. This is the other side of the coin of course.

With the discovery of mass graves, Catholics in Canada and abroad are wrestling with the knowledge that Church leaders have been complicit in evil throughout our history. Our Church is Holy because it springs from the heart of Christ, and yet her members are fallen men and woman. As we learn about the ugliness of abuse and slavery and prejudice, we must offer prayers and actions of reparation, and learn from the witness of those men and women who fought evil within the Church as well as without.

As we celebrate the Eucharist together again following the Pandemic, we celebrate our unity in Christ in sharing the one bread and the one cup, and as we offer each other the sign of peace we are challenged to make it a reality in our lives and the lives of others.

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