



Fifth Week of Lent (Year B): 21<sup>st</sup> / 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

**“When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself”**

A depiction of the Crucified Lord that everyone remembers, once they have seen it, is the Salvador Dali painting where the Cross is suspended over the world. Like the picture of the world from the “Mission” that first put a man on the moon, you don’t forget it. In the case of the world from outer space it is magnificent and beautiful: the astronauts were moved to read from the Book of Genesis about Creation. In the case of Dali’s depiction of Christ on the Cross looking down on the world you get God’s view: Jesus says “when I am lifted up from the earth I shall draw all men to myself”. God looks on us with a look of love and compassion.

In the blog of the Dominican Student Brothers at Blackfriars, Oxford, I read that Dali painted it in 1951 at a time when he was emerging from the atheism of his youth and was embracing the Catholic Faith. It was inspired by the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish mystic, St John of the Cross. Hence the title of the painting “Christ of St John of the Cross”. It hangs in the Kelvin Grove Art Gallery & Museum in Glasgow. I was talking to a friend about placing it in the opening section of the Burning Bush VLOG. She said “Is it really in Glasgow? I would go there just to see it”. Maybe you will do the same!

The Blackfriars Blog continues “it is a heavenly perspective, indeed that of God the Father! Interestingly, the Son, Christ, shares the same perspective as the Father...the glorious and serene Christ situated above the clouds speaks of Christ already raised up, ascended to His Father.”

You can look up from below, where the boat and fishing nets are from which John and James were called, and see Christ immense and embracing everything. From above the Father is offering us His Son.

The union of will between Father and Son is spelled out by St John in the Gospel. Jesus says “what shall I say ‘Father save me from this hour? But, it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.’”

There is a challenge there for us too: to make God’s way our way. Ferlita in his commentary for the Fifth Sunday says “if we wish to serve Jesus, if we wish to be where he is we must follow him”, quoting St John Chapter 12, “we must make his attitude ours, surrendering completely to God’s ways.”

Jesus spells this out for us in the first part of the Sunday Gospel “unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest...if a man serves me he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too.” In his commentary Fr Pollard says “Christians are the grains of wheat that Jesus

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has in mind, and he himself is the first of the grains...it is only by spending our lives for others that we eventually preserve them for ourselves”.

This week we celebrate the beginning of the fulfilment of the story of the Father’s love in the Annunciation of the Lord to Mary, and her “yes” to the Conception of His Son Jesus Christ. Mary’s journey with Jesus led to her standing at the foot of the Cross.

At the beginning of Holy Week, beginning Palm Sunday, we enter into the week of the Passion, the week when we remember how great the Lord’s love was for us. Pollard asks “is it asking too much that we, in solidarity with him, bury our selfishness and live instead in a manner that brings his love a little more into “our homes, our parishes, our working and social lives...” Your own good judgement and your own best heart already know the answer”.

Dali explained the inspiration for his painting came from a cosmic dream in which he saw the image (of the Crucified Christ) in colour in which his dream represented “the nucleus of the atom.” This nucleus later took on a metaphysical sense; I considered it “the very unity of the universe, the Christ”, he said.

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