



**Reflection 25th Week in Ordinary Time and the
Month of the Rosary 24 September - 1 October
Reflection Mgr Daniel McHugh**

“The Lord is close to all who call Him”

This coming Sunday I will be celebrating 56 Years since my Ordination to the Priesthood in 1967 by Archbishop Dwyer in my home Parish of Holy Family, Coventry. I have to admit I find it easy to give thanks for God’s “generosity” – the focus of the Parable in the Gospel for this Sunday. I will be giving thanks, and I hope others will find they have their own reason to give thanks for God’s generosity too in their lives.

In the Liturgy of the Church, we find many opportunities for recognising God’s generosity, and to give thanks. One I think of regularly is “Baptism”. This past Sunday I stepped in to celebrate a Baptism of a child when the Parish Priest was away. It was a joyous occasion for the family: family and friends come together to celebrate the birth of the child. In addition: for Catholics it is the celebration of rebirth as a son or daughter of God in the power of the Holy Spirit: the white garment/shawl is placed over the shoulders of the child to show that new life is to impact on their lives as they grow up; the lighted candle – symbol of Christ the Light of the World – is handed to the parents/godparents to highlight their responsibility to bring up the child in the light of the teaching of Jesus; the Holy Oil is used to anoint the child for a special vocation – following Christ in his/her life; the cleansing and growth giving waters of Baptism are poured over the child’s head giving new life in the Holy Spirit.

There is so much to give thanks for in celebrating the generosity of God – that’s why we recommend the lighting again of the Baptism Candle on the Anniversary of Baptism, just as I celebrate God’s generosity on my Ordination Anniversary. I always remember St. Pope John Paul II, on one of his visits back to Poland, going to the Baptismal Font of his home Parish and saying this was the most important moment of his life – people expected him to say it was the moment of his ordination as a Bishop or his election as Pope, but no, it was his Baptism when he became a Child of God, a member of the Family of the Church, a brother of Jesus Christ.

Some time ago, in a coach on a Pilgrimage I led the praying of the Rosary: in praying the different decades, I related them to the experience of the Sacraments, in particular the Sacrament of Baptism when recalling Jesus’ Baptism in the

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Jordan, inspired by Pope John Paul's Mysteries of Light. A person came to me afterwards to express appreciation. If you haven't thought of reflecting in this way on the mysteries of the Rosary – perhaps you can consider doing so as we begin the Month of October, the Month of the Rosary this coming weekend. As you know, the Church treasures the Rosary as one of its most valued methods of prayer. One priest writing in the Catholic Herald this week speaks of it as “a help and comfort to tired and distracted souls.” I wonder if you feel that way sometimes?

On the subject of God's generosity (the theme that stands out for me in the 25th Sunday's Gospel) it is very appropriate that it's the Sunday of Thanksgiving for the Harvest. In more urban areas we can forget to some extent the great cycle of nature and God providing for our needs. There is always some discussion of agriculture and farming going on, but it's easy to focus on prices alone and to forget the great partnership that goes on between nature, the farmer and God, the Creator. In these days of a heightened awareness of the environment the Harvest Festival is an opportunity to give thanks for the great work of the creator and the wonderful work of the farmer who is entrusted with looking after creation and caring for the environment as well as being expected to provide all the food we need – at minimum cost!

Returning to *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Joy of the Gospel, which I spoke about briefly last Sunday, as we begin preparation for the Jubilee Year of 2025 with a special Year of Prayer and Reflection in 2024: Pope Francis ends the document with special reference to Our Lady, Mother of Evangelisation, and to Popular Piety as “a precious treasure of the Catholic Church.” I spoke of Mary's Dowry Pilgrimage to Walsingham and Devotion to the Cross as expressed in the *Tempietto “Volto Santo”* in Lucca, Italy. I suggested a Pilgrimage this coming year could be a way of focussing on the central Mysteries of our Faith – the Annunciation and Incarnation; and the Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. Some of these Popular Traditions, like the Rosary itself, are being recognised for the important part they play in the “spontaneous missionary activity of the people of God.” (E.G. no 122)

Personally, I hope the Feast of Our Lady of Ransom, 24 September, (my Ordination Date), will not be forgotten. It helps us focus on the need of Mary being with us on our journey, interceding for us as we share our Faith, which sets us free from so many ideologies that ensnare us today. Perhaps the celebration of England being the Dowry of Mary is another way of kindling our missionary fervour.

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At the end of Mass his homily at Mass celebrating England as Mary's Dowry on 3 September, Bishop Alan Hopes said: "At the end of the Mass, we are sent out to be the very presence of Jesus Christ in our World. We are to proclaim his Gospel; we are to live His love and mercy in our lives. We are sent out to commit ourselves to love and serve those who are in need, and to bring others to know and to love the Lord."

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