



13<sup>th</sup> Week of the Year: a Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh on Readings for the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday (26<sup>th</sup> June) and St Peter and St Paul (29<sup>th</sup> June)

**“I will follow you wherever you go”**

When I read those words in the Gospel of St Luke for the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday I was reminded of the words of St Peter in the account of the Passion: “Though all lose Faith. I will never lose Faith”. Jesus’ response: “This very night, before the clock crows you will have disowned me 3 times.” In St Luke’s Gospel we are being treated to a reflection on the cost of being a disciple of Our Lord. The context is Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem where He will pay the ultimate cost of following the Father’s will: the way to new life will cost His life. I am reminded of the famous spot on the Via Appia (a road leading out of Rome lined with Catacombs) called Domine Quo Vadis, “Lord where are you going?”, marked by a small chapel. The Church stands on a spot where, according to tradition, St Peter, fleeing from Rome to escape martyrdom, met an apparition of Jesus wending his way to the city. In reply to his question, he was told, “venio iterum crucifigi”, “I go to be crucified anew.” Thereupon the saint returned to Rome and martyrdom. The catacombs, called “caemeteria” up to the 15<sup>C</sup> are subterranean tufa quarries in which early Christians found refuge from their persecutors and a safe place for the practice of their religion and the burial of their dead.

The message we receive from the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel of the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday and the Solemnity of St Peter and St Paul is that being disciples of Jesus, taking the way to true freedom, new life, is not the road to self-indulgence that St Paul speaks of in the letter to the Galatians (the second reading for the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday), rather it is following the promptings of the Holy Spirit and serving one another in works of love.

As I began to write this Reflection I was doing so on the Feast of St John Fisher and St Thomas More, two great martyrs for our Faith in the 1600s. It was also the Day (was the date chosen on purpose I wonder?) when the World Meeting of Families began in Rome. It was a moving occasion streamed live from the Paul VI Auditorium, with Pope Francis present (now in his wheelchair). It began with a number of families speaking about their lives and their Faith. This is where parents grow in their following of the Gospel, and where they pass it on to their children. It was not a witness to over-pious lives but to the reality of struggles people have and how they find their Faith (expressed in love, prayer and the Sacraments) sustains and leads them to new horizons.

I was thinking of the real-life situations I am engaged in at this time:

- First the Family Afternoon for Catholic Families from Hong Kong who have come here in large numbers to experience the freedom we so easily take for granted. My aim is to work with them to pass on their Faith to future generations. I’m sure we will be considering Catechesis for their children who are not all in Catholic schools, due to the limits on places. Mutual support and accompaniment in Faith Formation will be a challenge we will be trying to

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resolve. The support of local parishes and Deanery as well as the Chinese Chaplaincy will be called upon.

- Then in my mind, as Co-Ordinator of Ethnic Chaplaincies, is the growing number of refugees from Ukraine, one of the families speaking in Rome was from Ukraine, a mother and daughter, who have been forced to flee home in the War. Their challenges and those of their host family came to the fore in the testimony they gave before Pope Francis, and the strength their Faith has given and the support of the Church Community. I thought of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the Archdiocese: their generosity and welcome – can we the host community play a greater part in this?

The discipleship that Jesus is teaching in the Gospel for the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday and the witness of the great Apostles Peter and Paul, has to be passed on through our families and our parishes. We pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us in living and passing on the wonder of being Disciples of Jesus to future generations: the world we live in is all too ready to drown out the way of Jesus, to lead us into the way of self, the consumer society. Father, keep us from darkness and keep us in the radiance of your truth: the truth spoken by St John Henry Newman “In the Eucharist, the Heart of Jesus beats for us still”.

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