



21st Week and St Margaret and St Margaret Clitherow 27-30 August 2023

Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church”

Each week when I prepare my Reflection for Sunday Mass I think too of the Vlog I work on to post on the Ethnic Chaplaincies website – Our Lady of Good Counsel – and ask to be posted on the Diocesan website too. It is called “Burning Bush” and normally it has 2 pictures. My Scripture Focus this weekend is “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church”, taken from the Gospel for the 21st Sunday. The first picture I suggested was that of the famous bronze statue of St Peter, seated on a marble throne in St Peter’s Basilica. The extended foot of the statue has been worn away by the many reverent kisses of the faithful. The statue is robed on high festivals, and the symbol of the ‘keys’ feature prominently on it. More important of course is the Tomb of Peter over which the Basilica is built: that is best accessed from the Crypt. No doubt the Basilica was purposely built to reflect the words of Jesus in the Gospel of the 21st Sunday:

“You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church”

It was Peter’s Confession of Faith: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” that led to the commission Peter received from Jesus and His use of the metaphor “*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven*” – which points especially to the teaching power of the leader of the Church. I thought especially of the way Pope Francis exercises this, as I chose to listen in to his catechesis on evangelisation at the General Audience today 23 August in the Pope St Paul VI Hall at the Vatican. He focused particularly on the Apparitions of Mary to St Juan Diego at Guadalupe in Mexico. I have been blessed to go there on Pilgrimage many years ago. Pope Francis noted how much this Apparition of Mary has to teach us about evangelisation today. The Faith had been taken to Mexico many years earlier, but it was perceived by the people as an imposition connected to the expansion of imperial ambitions at the time. When Our Lady came to Guadalupe she came speaking the language of the people, and dressed like them, to St Juan Diego. She communicated simply and comprehensibly like Jesus. Juan Diego – a simple person, a married man, who had embraced the Faith. Our Lady told him to go to the Bishop to tell him that she wanted a Church built there in her honour. At first the Bishop refused. Pope Francis said this refusal highlights the trials we meet in proclaiming the Gospel. We need to be aware that evangelising requires us not to lose heart. There is a danger he said that we may take refuge in our private prayers and devotions. Mary on the other hand wants us to go forward as she encouraged in the case of Juan Diego, and in the end he was successful. Juan Diego dedicated his life to the Shrine of Guadalupe. My personal experience was of a Shrine that is really at the heart of the people of Mexico and beyond

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in South America. Pope Francis went on then to speak of the consolation Mary our Mother gives us in our difficulties – Shrines like this he said are an oasis of Mercy and Consolation. People who go there – not just to Guadalupe but to other Shrines too – return to life refreshed with peace in their hearts.

The teaching of Pope Francis on evangelisation I found so heartening for all who hear him. You can see in our time the continuing witness to the Faith that was entrusted to Peter being fulfilled in the teaching of Francis. His reference to local shrines led me to think of the Shrine of St Margaret Clitherow in York (the second picture in our Vlog this week). She, and the other women Saints martyred at the time of persecution – Anne Line and Margaret Ward – are celebrated together this coming week. St Margaret Clitherow I mention in particular because her story – being martyred for sheltering priests – is inspirational. Her Shrine is easily accessed at nos.10-11 the Shambles in York and should not be missed by those who visit York and the surrounding areas as tourists. This was where she lived with her husband and family. Like so many mothers of families today she loved the Mass and was prepared to give everything at the time of persecution to protect the priests who celebrated the Eucharist. A visit there to pray and reflect on what is at the heart of our Faith can strengthen us in witness to the Gospel, to come away refreshed to play our part in evangelisation, particularly in the families of our day.

Let us play our part alongside Pope Francis in the proclamation of the truths of our Faith. We ask the prayers of St Juan Diego, St Margaret Clitherow, and especially our Blessed Lady of Walsingham for this intention.

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