



32nd Week in Ordinary Time: 7th/8th November

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“The Lord is my Shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.”

I have found the coverage of the G20 Conference in Rome and the COP26 in Glasgow fascinating. Both focused especially on Climate Change and how the countries of the whole world can come together to care for “our common home” as Pope Francis has called it. Prior to these conferences Pope Francis had gathered leaders of all Faiths to encourage the political leaders to make the bold choices needed to care for the earth and safeguard the poor.

Personally I found an interview with Prime Minister Johnson particularly significant. It took place in the Colosseum in Rome, an historic icon known the world over. He spoke of it as a “metaphor” for what can happen. We are used to promises of ever greater prosperity and wellbeing; this was a significant intervention because it brought home to us that just as the great Roman Empire crumbled, so the great ambition we have for ever greater riches can come down around our ears. We are already reeling from the Pandemic of COVID 19 that has left so many people dead and businesses destroyed in this country, while elsewhere poorer countries do not have the share of vaccines we enjoy.

The outcomes of climate change are already being experienced in terms of global warming and mighty floods that do not discriminate between rich and poor countries. We are learning that caring for one another across nations is a key part of the solution to the way forward – even from the point of view of self-interest alone, we need to collaborate, we need to give to others, especially poorer nations, to enable us all to survive.

If this is a radical change of direction, the radical nature of Christianity is never clearer than in the Gospel for the 32nd Sunday: the widow gives all she has to the Temple Treasury, whereas others, the religious leaders especially, only give from their surplus. It is clear to see how Jesus thinks: we recall his reaction to Peter when he remonstrated about Jesus intention to give all on the Cross: “the way you think is not God’s way, but mans.” As we read in the letter to the Hebrews for the 32nd Sunday “he made his appearance once and for all...to do away with sin by sacrificing Himself...so that he could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf.” We are called to follow Him: “take up your Cross and follow me” he says.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity on Monday this past week to visit Repton in Derbyshire; it used to be the Capital of the Kingdom of Mercia which existed from the 5th Century to the 11th Century. The main Church there is dedicated to Saint Wystan, a saintly Prince, who gave up his rightful claim to Kingship to live a more “religious life”. He died at the hands of a relative whom he had corrected on the grounds of his

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Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



proposing, marrying the Prince's widowed mother, to whom he was too closely related. The martyr Prince was first buried in the crypt of the Church named after him; and it became a place of Pilgrimage and miraculous cures. His remains were moved in 1019 to Evesham Abbey alongside St Egwin, the 3rd Bishop of Worcester who was responsible for building the famous Abbey there in the place where Our Lady appeared to the Swineheard, Eof.

Wystan, like the widow in the Gospel, reminds us of where our priorities should be in life: where our true homeland and riches are to be found. Living in this time of uncertainty in terms of climatic and political change, is matched in terms of change in the Church at local, national and international level. We are aware of parishes being amalgamated; Deaneries (the grouping of Parishes) being expanded; and the notion of Synodality being introduced as a way to involving all of us in a "listening" exercise that is to impact on the governing of the Church in Parish and Diocesan life as well as the Church at International level.

We don't take to change easily: it is important that we trust in the words that are placed for our meditation in the Communion Anthem for the 32nd Sunday:

"The Lord is my Shepherd; there is nothing I shall want."

And, to remember the words of Our Lord:

"I shall be with you to the end of times."

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