



6th Week of Easter: 8th/9th May 2021

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Love one another as I have loved you”

I am preparing this Homily for the weekend when we have the first International Day of Prayer for Eastern Christians. It is being promoted in the Archdiocese of Birmingham by Archbishop Longley in co-operation with a Charity, focusing on the Christians in the Middle East, called FACE (Fellowship and Aid for Christians of the East). Recently, Pope Francis went to Iraq and we heard, maybe for the first time, of Catholic Christians such as the Chaldeans and Syriacs. The Chaldeans have a presence in the Archdiocese with a Priest who celebrates Mass for them in their own Rite (this involves language, cultural/traditional elements, song and dance in some cases). The Christians in Iraq have suffered a great deal because of radical Islam and poor Political leadership sometimes influenced by external forces; many have had to leave their homeland. In the Parishes of the Diocese this weekend prayers will be said, together with our fellow Catholics, in many parts of the world, for Christians suffering in the Middle East, and a Collection is being taken up to support them through FACE.

In the Archdiocese a special initiative is taking place through schools building a partnership with a Catholic school in Beirut, Lebanon. Lebanon, like Iraq, has been in the News recently because of the explosions in the Port of Beirut with so many dying and the livelihood of others being destroyed. Lebanon, like Iraq and Syria (which I visited some years ago to mark the year of St Paul) is suffering too through a difficult Political situation, again aggravated by radical Islam and many refugees (over 1 million from Syria and Lebanon only has a population of 5 million).

The Catholic Christians there are called the Maronites. There are not many of them in Birmingham, more are in London, but their Priest sometimes comes to our Diocese to celebrate Mass in their Rite. Not long ago I prepared a young couple for Marriage who went back to Beirut to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony. The schools will be learning about each other, sharing music, song and art, as well as praying in their own language. In Lebanon, they speak Arabic and French, as well as English.

Learning about each other is so important: that comes out in the first reading for this Sunday's Mass from the Acts of the Apostles. Way back in the early days of the Church, St Peter realised that God's love, God's Grace was not restricted to any particular group, any particular culture. He was a Jew and they were chosen specially by God to be the people through whom the Savior Jesus, Son of God, would enter the World. Peter addressed the people after his Resurrection saying “The truth I have now come to realise is that God does not have favorites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him”.

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



In these days with modern communications and travel we are learning so much about other peoples and in our case learning about Catholic Christians and their way of worship in different parts of the world. To take the example of the Middle East, I saw a picture recently of Pope Francis with six Catholic Christian Patriarchs from that part of the world: as well as the Chaldeans and Maronites Patriarchs, who are also Cardinals, there were the Coptic, Syriac, Melkite and Armenians. Like St Peter, in my special role relating to the different Ethnic Communities for the Archbishop, I am learning so much about the way God is working through them, and, having some of them with us in the U.K., how they are enriching our Church here. We are blessed too with the presence of other Catholic Christians who have come to live in the U.K., many with their own Liturgical Rites and Customs such as the Syro Malabars, the Syro Malankaras, from India, the Alexandrians from Eritrea and the Byzantine from Ukraine, and that is just talking of those with different Liturgies from our Latin Roman Liturgy.

Many years ago I was the Priest Chaplain to the people from the Caribbean, the West Indies. I remember meeting a Minister from one of the Black Pentecostal Churches. He said to me I see all these peoples like a bouquet of flowers of many different colours. God looks on his peoples and loves them. This Sunday in the Gospel, Jesus calls us to love them too. He says "love one another as I have loved you". He said these words at the Last Supper, and he went on show how perfect his love was, laying down his life for us. What a wonderful calling we have, let us begin with our own individual families, reach out to the great family of the Church with all its variety, and go beyond supported by them to build a better world for peoples of all Faiths.

Addendum: This Homily is part of the Burning Bush VLOG on Our Lady of Good Counsel Ethnic Chaplaincies Website. There you can see the picture of the Patriarchs with Pope Francis, together with a picture of Our Lady of Czestochowa, a reminder of the Rosary Marathon called by Pope Francis in May for an end to the Pandemic. Different National Shrines are leading the Rosary each day. Czestochowa was earlier this week.

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