



32nd Week of the Year: 8th and 9th November 2020

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“For you my soul is thirsting O God, my God”

On Saturday last, the eve of All Saints, also called All Hallows, I was out walking with a friend and for the first time in many years I saw all the excitement of Halloween: children dressed up in witches’ hats, wearing ghostly attire. It’s all good fun, but not much to do with the Eve of All Saints Day, when we celebrate the goal of our lives, the dead rising to life, one with Our Lord in the joy of His Kingdom.

We move on this Sunday to ask ourselves how ready we are to meet Jesus on our journey of Faith. The interesting Parable in the Gospel relates to a custom at the time of our Lord whereby young maidens - friends and family members of the Bride – came to meet the Bridegroom, when he arrived to take the Bride to her new home. When read in context it is about being ready to meet Jesus the Bridegroom when He comes to take us into His Kingdom.

Interestingly, one of the slogans around dealing with the Virus has been “Stay Alert” and it speaks to these situations. I thought as I saw everyone partying last Saturday (and it wasn’t just children having fun, it was loads of people out in restaurants and bars with little social distancing) that phrase has not really hit home, and neither from a spiritual viewpoint has the notion of Jesus coming at a time we do not expect; we are not ready like the 5 foolish Bridesmaids. It can be read as a warning of course, but it can also be read from the perspective of joy; recognizing Jesus, encountering Him in the midst of life and its many distractions, can be very life-giving.

I thought of these words in Scripture about Our Lady, when I visited her Shrine in Walsingham this past week: “Mary pondered all these things in her heart.” It seems to me, if we are to be wise (the main thrust of the first reading) we need to have the disposition of Mary, listening to God’s word, being ready for His coming at all times, then we will be able to rejoice with Mary and make her words our own: “My soul glorifies the Lord, my Spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

At a time of so much gloom: I think especially of the continuing attacks by Islamic Fanatics as evidenced in Churches in France this past week; the violence in South West of Cameroon; the continuing war in Afghanistan; the oppression in China; and so much horror elsewhere that pits human beings against each other, we look to light in darkness. Like the wise Bridesmaids we carry the lighted lamps of expectation and welcome to the Bridegroom, knowing that He is our only Hope, the Hope of the Nations.

As we visit the graves of loved ones in our cemeteries, and remember those who died in war and die now due to the Pandemic, in this month of November, let us commit

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ourselves anew to taking the light of love and forgiveness to all peoples, and renew our Hope in His Eternal Life.

The words of St John Henry Newman's poem which he wrote in a time storm "lead kindly light" come to mind as we begin the new lockdown:

"Lead kindly light
amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead thou me on!
Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene –
one step enough for me.

So long, Thy power
hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, til
The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since,
And lost awhile."

Words expressing Newman's Faith at a time of serious sickness and isolation, words that may bring consolation especially to those most sick and isolated in the present Pandemic.

5th November 2020

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