



Podcast for the Feast of the Chair of St Peter: 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021

Mgr Daniel McHugh

*Picture of the Bronze Statue of St Peter in the Basilica seated on a marble throne by Arnolfo di Cambio and these words: Journey of Faith with Monsignor Daniel McHugh Life from the Holy Mass*

Hello, I am Monsignor Daniel McHugh. Today I will be reflecting on the Feast of the Chair of St Peter, the 22<sup>nd</sup> February. On entry to St Peter's Basilica, the first special chapel on the right is where the Sculpture of Michelangelo, the Pieta, sits; next the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, and beyond that the famous Bronze Statue of St Peter by Arnolfo di Cambio, with the extended foot worn away by kisses of people going there to venerate and kiss it. Unfortunately, though you can see it, you cannot get to venerate it at the moment because of the restrictions due to Coronavirus. Over the years I have seen the Faithful, and many others going there to pray. Catholics have a great devotion to St Peter and his successors. The Feast is called the Chair of St Peter because it focuses on the role of the Pope as chief pastor and teacher. The chair symbolises "authority and service". Even in modern times we expect the Queen to sit on a special throne for the speech at the opening of Parliament, and distinguished scholars ascend to the chair of History or Theology at a University. Peter was chosen by Our Lord to be Chief among the Apostles (who He sent out to teach all nations and Baptise), when he said "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church...I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven". And indeed the statue I speak of has Peter holding the keys, the symbol of his unique authority and leadership. And it is especially his leadership that I point to today. In the Acts of the Apostles he makes it plain that the Good News of Jesus Christ is for all peoples, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, at the Council of Jerusalem. He said: "God, who can read everyone's heart, showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as He had to us." You could call that an ex Cathedra/from the Chair Proclamation.

I was fortunate to be in Rome when Pope St John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council and launched the reforms that brought the Church into the Modern World, as one of its Documents is entitled. We have seen so much to give thanks for in the leadership of the successors of St Peter in our times, not least that of Pope Francis, who will leave soon for an Apostolic Visit to Iraq, striving especially to put in place the groundwork for all Faiths to work together for peace and justice in the world today; taking the Good News of Jesus Christ on Fraternity to the major issues of our times.

St Peter pray for him.

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