



19th Week of Ordinary Time: 8th /9th August 2021

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“No one can come to me, unless he is drawn by the Father who has sent me.”

It has been a wonderful Olympics in many ways, not least the inspiration young people found in the achievements of many fantastic athletes. You can see them going to practice their favorite sport, hoping that they can emulate the achievements of their heroes.

Fortunately, in our Faith life there are many people who inspire us too. Only recently I read about a young singer called Jane Marczewski who performed on America’s Got Talent as Nightbirde, who shared on social media that she has been forced to pull out of the show due to her deteriorating health. The singer captured hearts, we are told by “Aletia”, not only for her beautiful voice, but for her incredible Faith as she battles cancer. It was news nobody wanted to hear! Her Announcement went as follows: “Sharing my heart with the world on AGT has been an honour and a dream come true. My point of view this summer has been astounding. What a miracle that the pain I’ve walked through can be reworked into beauty that makes people all over the world open their eyes wider.”

It was only when she was returning to music in 2017 that she discovered she has stage 3 breast cancer: her last check-up revealed cancer in her lungs, spine and liver. Getting out on stage with her song “It’s OK” was captivating. In response to questioning from the judges she said “you can’t wait until life isn’t hard anymore, before you decide to be happy”. The depth of her spirituality is refreshing. She talks of her pain, her anger, but most importantly her vision of God permanently by her side. She has been given just a 2% chance of surviving her battle with cancer. Yet in her performance and her writing we see how her Faith in God fills her with hope – not necessarily the hope of living a long life, but developing a deep and everlasting relationship with God.

I have always liked those words in the Gospel for the 19th Sunday “No one can come to me, unless he is drawn by the Father who has sent me”. Probably all of us are aware that without God’s Grace we would not have the joy and hope we have in Christ whatever our situation, but it is good to have the example of Nightbirde (a stage name which special meaning for Jane) to inspire us to work to nurture that Grace to a deeper level.

In Chapter 6 of St John the context for these words is “the Bread of Life”, Christ the living Bread, our spiritual food for the journey – the food that is at the heart the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which we celebrate each Sunday and will be celebrated in a special way at the International Eucharistic Congress in Estergom - Budapest in Hungary 5th - 12th September. Pope Francis will visit for the closing Liturgy. It is our opportunity, using the wonder of modern technology to become part of the celebration, and to give thanks for the Faith we have been called to, while uniting ourselves spiritually with our

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brothers and sisters across the world and taking our Faith to a deeper level, together with all who need to see there is a lot to be happy about. What a privilege it is to be able to choose this happiness, because God has first chosen us.

Our prayers are with Nightbirde as she continues to battle cancer. In her announcement she concluded “thank you for all your support, it means the world to me. Stay with me, I’ll be better soon. I’m planning my future, not my legacy. Pretty beat up, but I’ve still got my dreams.”

If you know the show America’s Got Talent you’ll not be surprised that Simon Cowell, one of the judges and the producer of the show, hit the golden buzzer to send Nightbirde directly through to the final.

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