



Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Reflection / Homily for the First Week in Ordinary Time: 9th/10th Jan 2022– Mgr Daniel McHugh

“You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.”

“Hold onto your horses; it’s going to be quite a ride” - so went the comment of an Emeritus Bishop on what would happen when Pope Francis settled in to his role as leader of the Catholic Church. And, so it is proving to be: a far cry from “being comfortable with each other” which was the joy another (now a deceased Bishop) celebrated at a gathering with fellow Bishops. And, the challenge Pope Francis brings to his “office” is not simply to Bishops, it is to all of us as we set out on the Synodal Pathway; we all have responsibilities to change the world, we can’t leave it to “Father” or to the Bishop for that matter.

There is no better week to reflect on what this means than the one which begins with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. It is the Feast that continues the “manifestation”, the making known to the world of the “Anointed” One which began on the Solemnity of the Epiphany, where we reflected on Jesus coming for all peoples not just the “chosen people” in Palestine.

Pope Francis continually focusses on the person of Jesus in guiding us on our journey through the world we live in today. Reading an article by Father Spadaro SJ Editor-in-Chief of La Civiltà Cattolica on the Pope’s most recent Apostolic visit to Cyprus and Greece, I found inspiration and challenge in the witness of Pope Francis as he travelled and spoke in those historic and complex countries, which have so much potential to teach us the way as Disciples of Jesus.

As Co-Ordinator of Ethnic Chaplaincies, Eparchies and Missions I am very aware of the riches of the Church in terms of different cultures, languages and liturgies. Pope Francis spoke of this particularly in Greece where so many in the relatively small Catholic Community come from different immigrant groups. He celebrated this, as we do more and more in this country too. The Emeritus Archbishop of Athens, Sevastianos Rossolatos, who is President of the Bishops’ Conference of Greece, welcomed the Pope to the Cathedral in Athens saying among other things that the presence of migrants had changed the face of the Catholic Community in Greece and reinvigorated it. At the most recent meeting of Priests in this Diocese to prepare for beginning the reflection at Parish level on the Synodal Pathway (sharing our Faith to lead us closer to Christ) it was remarked how many of those present were from other parts of the world, especially Africa, India and other parts of Asia. We have much to be thankful for, and the Intercultural Mass in Coventry (the European City of Culture this year) at St Osburg’s in October highlighted this in a liturgy where Faith in the Eucharist brought together many different ethnic communities sharing their languages, music, song and dance, not to mention food afterwards!

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



Pope Francis pointed to the Inculturation of Faith that began in Greece saying “it was St Paul who inaugurated the encounter between early Christianity and Greek Culture”.

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord leads us to reflect on the Anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit “for all men” as St Paul says in the Acts of the Apostles. In Cyprus Pope Francis stood at the point where Europe and the Middle East meet, a divided country; Nicosia is the last divided capital in Europe. Here he was to “unpack” the meaning of Paul’s words in terms of a vision of the Church founded on the richness of diversity. He spoke of the Church as “a universal open space in which all are welcomed and reached by God’s mercy and invitation to love.” His appeal was: “please remember, walls do not and should not exist in the Catholic Church. For the Church is a common home, a place of relationships and of co-existence in diversity.”

In celebrating the manifestation of Jesus and his Mission to the people at His Baptisms, we are conscious of our own Baptism, a people called to be witnesses to the way of Jesus. We prayed in the opening prayer of the Mass on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord “grant that [we] your children by adoption, reborn of water and the Holy Spirit, may always be pleasing to you”.

“Hold on to your horses; it’s going to be quite a ride.” We are all called to take on responsibility for the Mission of the Church today.

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