



The Annunciation and Laetare: 25th/27th March 2022
Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Rejoice”

On Friday 25th March, the Christian world celebrated the Annunciation of the Lord: the occasion when Mary was told by the Angel that she was to be mother of the Saviour, Jesus the Messiah, and Mary accepted God’s Will; she trusted in His Will for her. It was the day chosen by Pope Francis to Consecrate the world, in particular Ukraine and Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, praying for world peace.

He asked Bishops, Priests and People across the world to join him in prayer for this intention. In these days of instant communication, especially via Twitter, we would see the ceremony taking place in Rome and simultaneously in Fatima, where Our Lady first asked for the Consecration of Russia. There were moving scenes as the Catholic world gathered around Pope Francis in the context of a Service of Penance and Reconciliation.

One that struck me emotionally took place in Glasgow in Scotland: it was communicated via a Sancta Familia Media Tweet and it read:

“Goosebumps as 2000 sing Ave Maria for Peace in the World in George Square, Glasgow.”
People of all ages, young and old, were singing to our Blessed Mother, and Praying the Rosary in a public square in Glasgow: a spontaneous expression of Faith and entrustment of the cause of Peace to Mary Immaculate.

What has happened in Ukraine through the Russian invasion has turned the world to prayer, as the fear of Nuclear War, together with the horror of destruction of human life, is once more with us in a Century when we thought this type of War was long gone in Europe. The Consecration of the world and especially Russia and now Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is not something new, particularly with the request of Mary at the Apparitions in Fatima. The language used needs some unpacking though: “consecration” is often understood better as “entrusting” or entrustment of our cause to Mary Mother of Jesus, and our Mother, through Him whose Body we become at Baptism.

I was present at the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock in the West of Ireland for the Feast of the Annunciation, and there too the Prayer of Consecration took place in communion with other Marian Shrines across the world, in this case at evening Mass in the Parish Church where the Apparition took place. My morning Mass in the Chapel of the Apparition was for Peace, entrusting our cause to Mary. The Mother who stood with her people there at Knock in a time of great poverty way back in 1879 is still there for the thousands of pilgrims who travel from all over every year. It is my attention to introduce the Ethnic Chaplaincies (in a special Pilgrimage at the beginning of September) to the grace of this Shrine, the special gift it is.

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



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Ethnic Chaplaincies

Most interesting, given the Gospel reading for this Laetare Sunday, a Latin word meaning “Rejoice”, where the central Parable of the Prodigal Son communicates the forgiveness and reconciliation in love of God for those who turn back to Him seeking His healing embrace, is the context in which Pope Francis chose to make the Prayer of Consecration. It was in a Penitential Service of Reconciliation with Confession: the Holy Father Himself going to Confession and hearing Confessions. Forgiveness of Sin is at the heart of Our Lord’s coming to live among us: that through uniting ourselves with Him we can have forgiveness like the Prodigal Son. We are part of a world in need of healing from sin of selfishness and greed – a message the Pope sought to communicate on Friday; it is at the root of conflict between all of us and between nations too. Repentance of this sin is the way to Peace.

May the prayers of Mary, the Immaculate, draw Russia and Ukraine to follow this path.

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