



29th Week of Ordinary Time: 16th/17th October

Reflection/Homily by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“For all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess 5:18)

This past week I went to Greece with a friend from Roman Days. It was a special opportunity to spend some time in Athens and visit a number of places I had wanted to see for years: the Monasteries at Meteora, Thessaloniki where Paul preached, and of course Athens itself with its famous Acropolis where the Pantheon and the Areopagus where Paul addressed the men of Athens on the “Altar to the unknown God” in the Pantheon. Overall, as I reflected on the Church I found there; I was moved to give thanks: it is very much alive particularly in its Celebration of the Eucharist, Baptism and Marriage; and the amazing witness of the monks and nuns in the Monasteries of Meteora with millions of visitors each year going to see the beautiful Byzantine Churches with their wonderful frescoes of the central truths of Christian Faith.

I came across those words of St Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 “Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.” In the Gospel this Sunday Jesus encourages us to “pray continually and never lose heart”. I found the visit to Greece led me to pray in thanksgiving and intercession as I lit candles in devotion, as so many do in the Churches there.

I am at this time very aware of having much to give thanks for as I celebrate my Emerald Jubilee as a Priest and can look back over a fruitful ministry and can dwell again this week on the opening of the Second Vatican Council on 11th October 1962. I was a student in Rome when some 2,500 Bishops gathered in Council with Pope St John XXIII the Pope who opened the windows of the Church onto the world. Much is being written about the Council and its impact on the Church: some look back with nostalgia to the days when there wasn’t so much change, others see reason for hope as we move forward in a more Synodal Church. I like the image of Moses with his arms raised in prayer in the Exodus reading for the 29th Sunday: as “long as Moses kept his arms raised Israel had the advantage”. And, my mind goes to the words of the famous Apostle Paul to the people he had evangelized in Thessaloniki: “Be happy at all times, pray constantly.”

As I write this Reflection I am looking forward to a Marriage tomorrow: a young Catholic couple, the bride was at school in St George and St Teresa where I spent time each week at school Mass. It was one of the occasions where I enjoyed meeting parents (especially mums) who joined the children at Mass, and the children put so much into the preparation and celebration of the Mass. It is part of the happy Ministry of a Priest, and it is pleasing to be invited to celebrate – years later – the “big day” of one of the pupils of those times.

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



I could bemoan the fact that many young people don't get married in Church these days; I prefer to Celebrate the fact that many do: it is a special grace in what can be seen as a very pagan environment, until it comes to the occasion of a Royal Funeral, that is! Suddenly you see the "nation at prayer".

Recently, I celebrated Baptism for a family whose marriage was abroad: I still remember seeing 6 young men there taking part in the Nuptial Mass, friends from school days at St Peter's. Now one of them is getting Married, again in Church, this time Olton Friary!

It is so easy to get into a negative outlook on our Catholic Secondary Schools: they are not achieving the practice of the Faith we hope for! The life of Faith requires something of us as St Paul says in the reading from 2 Timothy for the 29th Sunday: "You must keep to what you have been taught and know to be true". We can't leave it all to others, including our schools.

Pope Francis speaking on the 60th Anniversary of the Council this week said "the Church needs first to be viewed from on high, with God's eyes, eyes full of love. Let us ask ourselves if we, in the Church, start with God and His loving gaze upon us..." Jesus says to each of us as He said to Peter in Galilee. "Do you love me?" The Pope continues "Each of us has his or her own Galilee, the Galilee of our first love, and certainly today to return to our own Galilee is to hear the voice of the Lord: "Follow me". And there, to "find once more in the gaze of the crucified and risen Lord a joy that had faded; to focus upon Jesus...This is our view from on high; this is our ever-living source: Jesus, the Galilee of love, Jesus who calls us, Jesus who asks us: "Do you love me?""

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