



6<sup>th</sup> Week of the Year and World Day of Prayer for the Sick 12/13 February 2023  
Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

**“Lead me, guide me, for the sake of your name” (Psalm 30)**

I was privileged yesterday evening, Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February, to celebrate a livestream Mass for a Prayer Group who are praying intensely for two people, who are sick and seeking physical healing. In this situation, I chose to anticipate the Mass of Our Lady of Lourdes which is on Saturday 11 February, World Day of Prayer for the Sick.

I searched for the Reflection of Pope Francis for this special day, which was initiated by Pope St John Paul II and placed annually on 11 February when we remember Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes. The Shrine is renowned for the healing that takes place there, especially through the spring of water, which people go to bathe in.

I quoted from the Pope’s message in my Homily: *“I invite all of us to reflect on the fact that it is especially through the experience of vulnerability and illness that we can learn to walk together according to the style of God, which is closeness, compassion, and tenderness”*

I have seen this closeness in this Prayer Group over years as they have turned to me for remembrance of their needs for healing at Mass.

The Pope said: *“We are all fragile and vulnerable, and need that compassion which knows how to pause, approach, heal, and raise up. . . . the World Day of the Sick calls for prayer and closeness towards those who suffer.”*

Then he speaks of Lourdes: *“On 11 February, let us turn our thoughts to the Shrine of Lourdes, a prophetic lesson entrusted to the Church for our modern times. It is not only what functions well or those who are productive that matter. Sick people, in fact, are at the centre of God’s people, and the Church advances together with them as a sign of a humanity in which everyone is precious and no one should be discarded or left behind.”*

I was especially interested in the Scripture readings chosen by the Prayer Group for the Mass: the Gospel was from Matthew 25, the Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids with their lamps lit, waiting for the Bridegroom. The moral being that we are to be ready for the coming of the Lord at all times; the first reading was the beautiful reading, Corinthians 13 about love being patient, kind etc. concluding with St. Paul declaring “there are three things that last: Faith, Hope and Love, and the greatest of these is love.” Both spoke to the situation: prayer for healing in the context of a love that is much more than just keeping the law (the thrust of this Sunday’s Gospel) and readiness to meet the Lord, the Bridegroom, when he comes.

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It strikes me that the reading from 1 Corinthians 2 for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday, where the focus is on Wisdom, revealing “the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him” has been revealed through the Spirit to all who pray for healing and yet live knowing that our destiny is even greater than this present life.

Thinking of our weekly Burning Bush Vlog and the pictures to use to assist our reflection on the Scriptures for Sunday, my mind turned to a picture I took on my recent visit to Venice. In the Parish Church of St. Moisè I came across a painting I have not seen before, of Jesus with the woman at the well, recorded in chapter 4 of St John where He says: “the water that I shall give will turn into a spring ... welling up to eternal life.”

The woman put down her jar and hurried back to the town to tell the people “Come and see the man who told me everything I ever did; I wonder if He is the Christ.”

It is an incident loved by many: we believe that Jesus will show us the way to the fulness of life in Him. It is expressed beautifully in the hymn recommended for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday

“Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou are mighty,  
Hold me with thy powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more”

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