



Fourth week of Lent 19<sup>th</sup> /20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 – Reflection Mgr Daniel McHugh

*“He has led the human race that walked in darkness into the radiance of the Faith”*  
Preface 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Year A

At the beginning of Lent the Rite of Election or Enrolment took place in St Chad’s Cathedral. As I walked in with a young family who are looking forward to initiation into the Church the Mum said: “Oh I hadn’t expected so many people to be here.” They were happy and surprised to see many people, young and old, from different ethnic backgrounds coming forward to enrol to be Catholic. As Lent has progressed it is common to see steps being taken by those who enrolled at the Cathedral at Sunday Mass in Parishes, marked by certain rites and prayers. For example last Sunday, the third in Lent they were presented with the Creed, our Profession of Faith at Mass. This Fourth Sunday, when we have the healing of the man from blindness in the Gospel of St John they are presented with the Lord’s Prayer, the Our Father.

I was interested to read a meditation on just one phrase from the Our Father “Hallowed be thy Name” by Alfred Delp, a Jesuit priest executed by the Nazis on 2 February 1945, for his refusal to condone the Third Reich and leave the Jesuits. While in prison he meditated on the Lord’s Prayer. He wrote “This phrase, Hallowed be thy Name, teaches us to pray for the worthy ideal, for the holy, venerated standard. Unless they have something of supreme value, something at the centre of their being which they can venerate, human beings gradually deteriorate. Human nature is so constituted that it must have something holy that it can worship, otherwise it becomes cramped and distorted, and instead of a holy object of veneration something else will take its place.” He was speaking from experience of the Third Reich where “the name of God is no longer the first and foremost of all names in the land and the voice of the people, then everything else that was once precious and prized has lost its name and been subjected to false and falsifying labels. The cliché, the label, the uniform, the slogan, the “dominant trend of the masses” – these are our rulers. And pity the man who dares to differ, to proclaim his own thoughts or use his own name.”

This discourse on “Hallowed be thy Name” ends: “Prayer is our way to freedom and education in the method of prayer is the most valuable service that we can give to humankind. It makes it possible for the temple and the altar to again occupy their rightful place and for humanity to humble itself and measure its responsibilities in the name of God”. In our age where “science” can be the god that does not allow space for anything other than materialism, these words of Delp are as relevant as they were in his time of hyper nationalism which also had no space for religion.

The Lord’s Prayer is highlighted/presented to the catechumens in the Mass of the Fourth Sunday Year A when the Gospel is about the miracle of the man born blind being given

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sight by Jesus, who says in St John's Gospel "he was born blind so that the works of God may be displayed in him". The man born blind declares "he is a prophet" to those who question him about his cure. Jesus Himself asks him "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The man replies "tell me who he is so that I may believe in him". Jesus said "you are looking at him; He is speaking to you". The man said, "Lord, I believe" and worshipped Him.

A name given to the step taken by catechumens during Lent is the Scrutinies. They are being asked by the Church as Jesus asked the man born blind "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" a title for Jesus, the Messiah. Everything flows from this: the Creed, the Our Father, our way of life. There were those in the Gospel story who found it hard to accept Jesus for who He was; "the cured man came up against a darkness of mind formed out of preoccupations effectively blocking the light" says Ferlita in his commentary. And today we find in our living and following the "Way" of Jesus a similar mindset that is not open to believing in the "new sight" he gives.

The time of Lent is an opportunity for all of us to enter into the spirit of the Scrutinies: who do we believe is the Son of Man; how does this affect our way of life; and can we make a renewed commitment to "Our Father" being the one we worship, the "supreme value... at the centre" ... of our being" as Delp says in his meditation. As we pray the Our Father this week let us put our lives under "scrutiny" too. Do we compromise in the face of the predominant ideologies of our day?

On Monday 20 March the Solemnity of St Joseph – our model of Faith in God's Word – we say in the Collect at Mass:

*Grant, we pray, almighty God, that by St Joseph's intercession your Church may constantly watch over the unfolding of the mysteries of human salvation, whose beginnings you entrusted to his faithful care". Amen*

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