



7th Week of Easter 12 May 2024 : Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“The World Needs Christian Hope” (Pope Francis General Audience 8 May)

“I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one” (John 17:15)

A friend on Facebook posted this ethical maxim for the Rabbinical Jewish Tradition this week:

*“Do not be daunted
By the enormity of this world’s grief
Do justly now
Love mercy now
Walk humbly now
You are not obligated to
complete the work,
But neither are you free
to abandon it.”*

We can be overwhelmed by the challenging times we live in. The media bombards us with grief:

- Children being abused through the Internet;
- Countries being invaded;
- Food and fuel costs rising;
- Foreign affairs becoming ever more threatening

This maxim suggests we are not to be daunted, even when we cannot tackle all these issues. The Gospel reading for the 7th Sunday of Easter draws on the prayer of Jesus given us by St John from the Last Supper and it speaks to the situation. Reading the prayer through the lens of the Resurrection we know that the light of Christ has overcome the darkness of sin and death. Speaking in catechesis on the virtue of “Hope” in the General Audience on Wednesday this week Pope Francis said:

“Without hope many people give up on life and all the other virtues risk crumbling and ending up in ashes.” The Pope then quoted Pope Benedict XVI “Only when the future is

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certain as a positive reality does it become possible to live in the present as well.” Pope Francis continued saying Christians realise that hope does not come from their own merit: *“If they believe in the future, it is because Christ died and rose again and gave us His Spirit If you believe in the Resurrection of Christ, then you know with certainty that no defeat and no death is forever.”* He went on to say: *“The world today is in need of this Christian virtue even when around us many have succumbed to disillusionment those who are inspired by hope and are patient are able to get through the darkest of nights.”*

In the Liturgical Cycle we are in the Upper Room again with Mary and the Disciples after the Ascension of Our Lord. We are conscious in the Gospel of being sent out by Jesus who prayed that we be protected from the evil one while we remain in the world to witness to Him. We await now the coming of the Holy Spirit of Our Lord Jesus who unites us with Him and the Father and renews us in our Faith at Pentecost.

I like to think, especially in this month of May, of Mary being with us in prayer as we wait. Jesus prays for protection of his disciples from the evil one in the Gospel for the 7th Sunday, and the opening reflection from Rabbinical Tradition points to the daunting reality of evil around us today. Yesterday I noted a post in X from my former parish school of the children being led in prayer celebrating Mary’s month with a procession and bringing flowers to place at her statue in the school grounds. I responded with a short message saying how pleased I was to see this tradition continuing: I believe in introducing our children to Mary’s presence with us on our Faith journey, as it is so enriching for them in life. Indeed, as some will know, I see visits to places of our Faith on holidays and days out as so valuable: inevitably there will be an image of Mary there, and we renew our personal salutation to her. It is a way of remaining in close touch with Jesus, her Son; something Jesus prays for in the passage from Scripture for the 7th Sunday: *“Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us.”* The different Shrines of Mary across the world offer us special opportunities to renew our personal relationship to her as our Mother, the Mother of the Church. For example, on 13 May we have the Celebration of Our Lady of Fatima, recalling the date of her first Apparition. On 8 May we had the occasion of a special prayer to Our Lady at the Basilica of the Rosary, Pompeii: an extraordinary place of devotion to Our Lady that many can pass by as they visit the ruin of Pompeii, not knowing of this International Shrine. In a peculiar way it is one of the interests of our world today to keep places of such Faith hidden from us. They can be a great ‘protection’ on the journey of Faith, where it is so easy to fall prey to the evil one in a world that is so opposed to the Truth, the light that Jesus came to bring.

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