



10th Week of the Year in Ordinary Time 9 June 2024
Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Anyone who does the Will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother”

We live in significant times: as I write this Reflection Wednesday 5 June we have begun the commemoration and celebration of 80 years since D-Day, the Allied response 5/6 June 1944 to the advance of Hitler’s forces in Europe in the Second World War. Brave men and women gave their lives for our freedom. The BBC Broadcast from Portsmouth ended with these words: *“As long as their stories are never forgotten, we’ll remember the people who gave us today.”* And, just last night, Tuesday 4 June the first televised debate took place between the leaders of our 2 main political parties as we prepare for a General Election on 4th July.

You might wonder what the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (7 and 8 June) and the 10th Sunday Mass have to do with such major national events. And yet, the Bishops of England and Wales have issued a statement giving us guidance for our response to the General Election which clearly shows that following the Way of Our Lord and the Imitation of Mary has much to say to our life in the world today and its direction and challenges. We are advised by the Bishops that we should be ready to vote on 4 July and prepared to do so with registration by 18 June. Cardinal Nichols in his video address speaks of the need to engage with our prospective MPs and highlights the importance of constructing society in such a way that *“families may flourish”*. There are seven areas that receive particular attention by the Bishops: one that stands out in the light of the D-Day Commemoration and Celebration is International Relations, Human Rights and Peacebuilding: I noted on the news earlier that President Zelenski of Ukraine will be attending the events in Normandy on 6th June, and President Biden will be there too! Then there is special mention in the Bishops guidance of Criminal Justice; Domestic Poverty; Family Life and Taxation; Education; Environment; Life Issues; and Migration. On each of these areas there are resources available from different Church Agencies and Organisations.

Does the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus have anything to do with any of the issues facing us in our times or is it a celebration to do with past times? Interestingly one of the requests of Jesus to St Mary Margaret in the Apparitions she experienced 350 years ago was for ‘reparation’ to His Sacred Heart. ‘Reparation’ is a term that is very familiar to us in these days: for example it is spoken of with regard to the post office workers who have been unjustly prosecuted, and in the Church we are familiar with it in regard to ‘abuse’. It

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is fruitful to consider our communal prayer on First Fridays as a small consolation to the Heart of Jesus wounded by such practices. In this devotion we come to the centre of our Faith. Jesus came in love for each one of us and gave His life on the Cross to lead us from the shackles of sin to the new life of Grace. In the Devotion we are invited to take part in the acts of reparation for the hurt we and others cause Him through giving way to a self-centred life.

The Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a celebration of Mary's selfless life, shown in her devotion to her Son from Birth to Death, depicted in art in His being placed in her arms at the moment of being taken down from the Cross. Catholic belief in Mary's association with her Son in giving His life in love for mankind is shown in Consecration of the World to the Immaculate Heart of Mary which took place in 1942 when Pope Pius XII put the world at war under the protection and prayer of Mary. Many countries and dioceses have since been consecrated to Mary Immaculate. Most recently we saw Pope Francis place the world under Mary's protection at the time of the Covid Pandemic.

On Sunday 9 June we return to "Ordinary Time" beginning with the 10th Sunday. Interestingly, in light of the troubled world in which we live, and a clear determination in our own country to exclude God from life entirely, Jesus is recounted in St Mark's Gospel as casting out devils. His family, including Mary His mother, are anxious to see Him. The crowd tell Him *"Your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for you."* It gives Jesus the opportunity to say that *"anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother."*

The question posed for us at this time is whether we are ready to embrace the Truth revealed to us by the Holy Spirit through Jesus. Scholars say *"the sin that cannot be forgiven"* is sinning against the light or persisting in error when we know better. Pollard in his commentary writes *"The Gospel truth of Jesus which we do not want to hear must be allowed to shape our moral and religious life, our business and political life, and so preserve our life into everlasting happiness."* We are being called to repentance: to turn to the way that leads to life. It is in the prayer of Psalm 129 *"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord"* in Sunday's Mass that we find encouragement and hope.

At the same time, we will be praying at Mass this Sunday remembering those who have died in war for our freedom; praying too for our new political leaders that they will be guided in decision making by the life giving teaching and example of the one who gave all in love for mankind.

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