



**30th Week of the Year and Solemnity of All Saints 27 October–1 November**  
**Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh**

***“What marvels the Lord worked for us. Indeed we were glad”*** (Psalm 125)

On Monday 21 October this week I met a former parishioner as I was walking in the afternoon through Henley-in-Arden. We stopped and spoke; she talked about her Mom, who is reaching the end of life (I know her from years ago). She was sad of course, but said *“that is how it is; it is something we have to face.”* I felt with her: I know from my own parents leaving how difficult it can be. I always think though: *“For us Catholics, we have Faith and hope in a risen life to come; it is not the end or just darkness.”* As I continued along the street, I saw, for the first time, the front of a house festooned in Halloween regalia: skulls, skeletons, scary witch like figures; a very different imagery of life beyond this world. I wonder what is the impact on our children’s imagination of this?

The Church has been wary of it for centuries, and indeed the Feast of All Saints on 1<sup>st</sup> November had its origins there. On All Hallows Eve, we celebrate the triumph of life over death, of light over darkness, as we commemorate All the Saints, the Church Triumphant. We go on to commemorate All the Faithful Departed on 2 November, as we pray for the Souls of those who are still being purified (Purgatory) in order to come face-to-face with God in the Kingdom of Glory. This Prayer for the Dead continues in November with visits to the graves of loved ones. We go then to give thanks and to pray that they may come into the fulness of life with our Risen Lord Jesus.

Halloween may disconcert us, and we may well realise it is a big money-making event, but it also gives the Church, and parents/grandparents especially, the opportunity to tell our children that there is no need to fear, that Jesus has opened the door to a new life. Indeed Funerals and visits to Cemeteries are occasions to teach the next generations about the reverence we have for those who die and their mortal remains.

On first hearing the Gospel for the 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year B it may seem to have little or nothing to do with Halloween or All Saints/All Hallows Day. The passage is centred on the miracle of the cure of a Blind Man Bartimaeus. We can imagine the scene as Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem with the crowds and this blind man calling out to him *“Master, let me see again.”* Jesus says *“Go; your faith has saved you.”* And immediately his sight returned and he followed him along the road.” Pollard in *“Finding Fresh Light”* writes: *‘On the way’ is not only the way to Jerusalem but, even more so, the way of Christ’s teaching and Christian fellowship. We are aware that ‘the way’ is also early Church code for Christian discipleship..... In response to the Lord’s goodness he (the blind man) is full of*

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*gratitude. And he does not hesitate to follow the Lord's way....Bartimaeus does not walk his own selfish way nor languish by the roadside of life as it passes by. The way of the Lord is the way for Him. May it continue to be our way as well."*

Can we make Jesus' way our way? Or do we prefer 'to languish by the roadside of life as it passes by?' We are so easily drawn into the selfish way that is enveloping us in the world around us. It may seem a small thing to take the opportunity of All Souls Day, 2 November, on Saturday this year, to set time aside to visit the Church and light a candle for loved ones, but it proclaims our Faith in Jesus' Way to Resurrection and New Life, to say no to Halloween's Pagan roots. We can take our children and grandchildren too if we miss that date, we can set aside another day in November, as the Nation does with Remembrance Sunday.

As I write this Reflection, Thursday 24 October, I am conscious that today Pope Francis will publish an Encyclical on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. At a Wednesday Audience in June (Austen Ivereigh reports) the Pope said he was preparing a document on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, "*in order to re-purpose today, to the whole Church, this devotion imbued with spiritual beauty.*" It is released midway through the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first of many visions that St Margaret Mary Alacoque had in her Convent at Paray-le-Monial, eastern France. "*It will do us great good to mediate on various aspects of the Lord's love.*" Francis said, "*which can illuminate the path of ecclesial renewal and say something meaningful to world that seems to have lost its heart.*"

The spirituality of the Sacred Heart was spread above all by the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. Ivereigh in his Tablet article says: Francis has never lost that devotion; personally I look forward to seeing what he has to say about renewal of this Devotion which takes us to the words of the Psalm for the 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday: "*What marvels the Lord worked for us. Indeed we are glad.*" He has prepared a home for us in the Heavens: that is what we celebrate on All Saints and All Souls.

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