



27th Week of the year 6 October 2024

Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Your Word is Truth” O Lord (John 17)

Recently I was happy to have the opportunity with a group of Pilgrims to visit Sotto il Monte, near Bergamo, where Pope St John XXIII was born, bought up and baptised. His Feast Day is this coming week on 11 October, the day the 2nd Vatican Council began. The second reading in the Office of Readings is taken from the solemn address of Pope John XXIII at the Inauguration of the Council. He said: *“At the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, it is evident, as always, that the truth of the Lord will remain for ever.”* However, he goes on to say, that while the Church has been ready to oppose errors: *“She judges it prudent to meet the needs of today by demonstrating more amply the power of her teaching, rather than by condemning”*. He went on: *“She opens the springs of her life-giving doctrine, by which people, illuminated by the light of Christ, can understand in the depths of their heart what they really are, how excellent is the dignity they possess and what end they should pursue.”*

Recently Pope Francis caused a stir when he made some off-the-cuff remarks to an interreligious group of young people in Singapore, during his Apostolic Visit to Asia. *“All religions are paths to God”* he said. *“I will use an analogy, they are like different languages that express the divine.”* Nathan Beacon writing in America Magazine says: *“As so often happens, a snippet from some impromptu remarks make it onto social media and many read it in a negative light, as though the Pope were saying that all religions are equally true (which would be absurd, since all religions, in some aspects, contradict one another). But the Pope’s point was that all religions are ways of communicating with God, not that they are all “the same”.* Beacon goes on to quote two documents from the Council Pope St John XXIII inaugurated: *“We are told, however, in “Lumen Gentium” (the light of all Nations), one of the principal documents of the Second Vatican Council, that non-Catholics “who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their action to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation.”* The door of salvation, the Church affirms, is open to all (Gaudium et Spes, Joy and Hope, the document on the Church in the Modern World No.22). Does this mean that the Church, as we know it, is no longer important? No, says Beacon. *“We can say at the same time that God operates always and everywhere graciously with all the human family, that the great faith traditions all serve as true pursuits of God and contain a ray of the same truth, and that we believe Christ established one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, that he gave the sacraments that communicate grace, and that the faith contains the fulness of grace and truth.”*

Reading St Mark’s Gospel over the past weeks we have been conscious of the teaching of Our Lord on the centrality of children in our Faith Family. You recall the words of Jesus

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in the Gospel Reading for the 26th Sunday Year B *“if anyone is an obstacle to bring down one of those little ones who have faith, he would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone around his neck.”* And in the Gospel reading for the 27th Sunday: *“People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, “let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”* I see so many parents bring their children to the Priest today for Blessing inspired by these words of Jesus, and of course it may well be that the practice of Baptism of children in the Early Church took place because of the welcome of Jesus to children, and the Blessing spoken of in the Gospel of the 27th Sunday: *“Then he put his arms round them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.”*

The Loyola Press, Sunday Connection, commentary on the 27th Sunday Gospel says: *“At first glance, the final part of today’s Gospel seems unconnected to the previous teaching about divorce. When read together, however, these passages present a strong picture of Jesus’ emphasis on the importance of family. God intended for women and men to be joined together in marriage. Among the purposes of marriage is the raising of children. By welcoming children and fostering their relationship with God, parents and families bear witness to the Kingdom of God.”* The beauty of the ideal of a Catholic Marriage in the teaching of the Church as a lifelong union is often lost sight of with so much emphasis on marriage breakdown. However, as a Priest who celebrates the Sacrament of Marriage and frequently gives a Blessing on important milestones in married life, I see the wonder and awe of God’s grace at work in the two who become “one body”,

Recently I was reading an article on “The Beauty of a Sacramental Marriage.” The Author Laura-Anne Smid says: *“God’s vision for marriage is that each couples relationship showcases the unbreakable bond of Christ’s love for us. Just as Jesus loved us – freely and wholeheartedly sacrificing himself to gain us access to heaven and complete union with God – we’re asked to live that out in marriage”. In our time the church offers the world a vision of marriage and family life that lives up to the aims of Pope St John XXIII when he inaugurated the Second Vatican Council: “the Church does not offer to the people of our times riches that perish....she imparts the goods of heavenly grace which, since they raise people to the dignity of the children of God, are powerful safeguards and aids to making their life more human.”*

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