



5th Sunday of Lent and the Jubilee Year April 2025

Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

**“Go, and from now on sin no more”
(John 8:11)**

Many people take the opportunity of the Jubilee Year to go to Rome on Pilgrimage. This past week I combined this Jubilee Pilgrimage with a celebration of my Birthday. Rome is a busy place at any time, but especially this year. People were there from all over the world and, like me, go to see and pray at the four great Basilicas. The first thing they look for is the Holy Door, the door designated for the Jubilee Indulgence through which to pass in order to meet Christ anew: they touch and sometimes kiss the door as they enter. I first went to St Peter’s where because too many people are entering through the designated Holy Door you have to go in by one central door and visit different parts of the Basilica, in particular the tomb of St Peter, before exiting to enter again by the “Holy Door”. This is a “practicality” that thins out the large numbers entering by the special Jubilee Door! One of the features that struck me on this visit (as a former student in Rome I have often been to St Peter’s) was the considerable numbers going to Confession in the Chapel in the left Transept designated for the Sacrament. Last Sunday the Gospel highlighted the joy of this Sacrament in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, where the love and mercy of the Father is central. Father Harrington, a Capuchin Franciscan in Ireland, posts regularly on Facebook, and I thought his post yesterday summed up the intention of Jesus. The title of his post: COME HOME

“Jesus told the story of the Prodigal Son to make a simple point:
never mind what you’ve done, just – come home.”

In the Catholic Church, a Jubilee or Holy Year is a special year of forgiveness and reconciliation in which people are invited to come back into the right relationship with God, with one another, and with all creation.

The Gospel for the fifth Sunday of Lent continues to offer lessons about God’s mercy and forgiveness. On this Sunday we hear not a Parable, but a report from John’s Gospel of an encounter among Jesus, the Scribes and Pharisees, and a woman caught in adultery. After writing on the ground with his finger, Jesus addresses those who stand before him and suggests that the one without sin cast the first stone. Jesus then returns to his writing. Sunday Connection of Loyola Press comments: “We can easily imagine the scene as the Pharisees and the elders disperse, one by one.....Left alone with the woman,

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Jesus asks where the accusers have gone. With no one remaining to condemn the woman, Jesus (the only one who is truly without sin) sends the woman on her way, exhorting her to avoid future sin." The commentary concludes: "Jesus' response to those who accuse the woman is more than a caution to us about making judgement of others. It is a profound lesson in divine mercy and forgiveness."

Preparing for the Jubilee Year Pope Francis said: "Pilgrimage is of course a fundamental element of every Jubilee event. Setting out on a journey is traditionally associated with our human quest for meaning in life". Not everyone is blessed to go on a Pilgrimage to Rome as I did: visiting not only St Peter's, but also St Mary Major, St Paul outside the Walls, and St John Lateran, the Cathedral Church of Rome. Everywhere I saw people full of Faith and Joy and particularly awe and wonder at the beautiful Basilicas. Nevertheless, the opportunity to take part in a Pilgrimage here at home, where we have Churches designated by Archbishop Longley for the Jubilee Indulgence are within easy reach. If you have not yet considered going personally to one of the Jubilee Churches maybe you can do so. Speaking with the Dean of St Chad's Cathedral recently I heard of a number of groups getting together from parishes and organisations to make a Jubilee visit where veneration of the Relic of St Chad and a time of prayer are a part of the Programme.

Personally I have recommended a number of community Pilgrimages where leadership and support from Bishops, Priests and Deacons are offered. And, I am proposing the Ethnic Chaplaincies a Day Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Evesham on Saturday 5 July. It is truly an amazing story going back to the 700s; the first apparition of Our Lady in England. Mary appeared to a swineherd Eoves. The Bishop St Egwin believed his story and was instrumental in building the famous Benedictine Abbey there. Sadly, the Abbey was destroyed at the Reformation, but buildings from that time remain, one St Lawrence (a redundant Church) contains a beautiful stained glass image of the Apparition.

The Evesham Pilgrimage was revived in the 1940's but has been discontinued in recent years due to lack of support. Happily the Catholic Church, The Immaculate Conception and St Egwin, has been designated as a Jubilee Church and the Parish Priest is celebrating a monthly Mass on the First Saturday for Pilgrims; nearby is the site of the original Abbey and the Apparition of Our Lady.

This weekend Archbishop Longley has written a Pastoral Letter urging us to take action with our MPs in relation to the Assisted Dying Bill. To me it is a special challenge to which we should respond in the Jubilee Year. We turn to Our Lady of Evesham with her prayer:

Virgin most holy, Mother of the Word Incarnate,
Treasurer of Graces, Refuge of Sinners,
we fly to your maternal love with
lively Faith and we ask you to

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THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Ethnic Chaplaincies

obtain for us the Grace to do the
Will of God.
Into your most holy hands we
commit the keeping of our hearts,
beseeching you for health of soul and body
in the certain hope that you our
most loving Mother
will hear our Prayer

Amen

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