



2nd Sunday of Easter
Divine Mercy Sunday 27 April 2025
Reflection Mgr Daniel McHugh

THE PEOPLE'S POPE. "The son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" Mark 10

Those of us who have been fortunate enough to follow the last days of Pope Francis, and especially the Urbi et Orbi Blessing on Easter Sunday – just a week ago – will be very aware that he followed the way of Jesus "giving his life" for all. Archbishop Paul Gallagher (Foreign Secretary) in an interview in the past two days put it this way: "he was determined to die with his boots on". Literally he gave everything in love for the people of the Church and for the world. Hence the title "Pope of the People".

As I write this Reflection I am doing so on the eve of the second Sunday of Easter, the day of the Pope's Funeral, known as Divine Mercy Sunday. Significantly, the reading from the Gospel this Easter Saturday morning recounts one of the Resurrection appearances of the Risen Jesus: He says "Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel." Pope Francis always made this the first point of his address to the people gathered in St Peter's Square for the Sunday Blessing. He highlighted certain aspects of the Gospel in a particular way, and you will remember he gave a whole year to the theme of Mercy, and it was his actions in this that he touched so many. Again and again he emphasised the importance of the Sacrament of Penance – saying forgiveness should never be withheld from the sinner, his last pastoral visit was at Easter to the Regina Coeli Prison in Rome.

There would be tensions at times between upholding the ideals of the Gospel and Catholic teaching based on this, for example in the area of marriage, and the reality of breakdown in relationships. As a priest meeting these situations in real life, I found his example liberating: he showed us the way: we knew that our attempts to meet people in their need of understanding and support in these difficulties had his backing. I have said frequently "he set us free" to help people move on in the arms of the Church.

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

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One of the most abiding images of Pope Francis reaching out to guide the Church Community and the whole world was during COVID when he walked through the streets of Rome in the rain carrying the Crucifix and an image of Our Lady in Procession to the front of St Peter's Basilica where he prayed for an end to the Pandemic and gave Benediction to all with the Blessed Sacrament. We knew then that the way to life is following Jesus with the Cross and after the example of Our Lady, the woman of Faith who stands with us always.

This commitment to serving the people to the end was shown in the Pope's final journey round the Square on Easter Sunday: though he was so weak he still stopped to lay his hand in Blessing on the babies held up to him. In his address (read for him that day), he asked for prayer for troubled and suffering areas of the world: he never forgot the poor and particularly migrants. As the son of immigrants himself – he knew their needs, their gifts and the importance of a Church Community that doesn't embrace prejudices.

There is so much that can be said of the wonderful example of Pope Francis, and two of the most significant are: his care for the environment (taking his own example from St Francis of Assisi) and his concern for Peace and the potential of all Faiths, all the sons and daughters of Abraham, to be bridge builders in a troubled and divided world.

The Psalm 118 for this Mercy Sunday has these words: "Give praise to the Lord, for he is good, his mercy endures for ever." We give thanks for Pope Francis who professed his Faith in Jesus as "the Son of the living God" as St Peter did and went on to live like Jesus whose mercy endures for ever.

We pray to Our Blessed Lady in whose Basilica Francis is now entombed, that he may be embraced in the arms of Jesus the Risen Lord, and that we, the Faithful disciples of the same Lord Jesus may be strengthened by the Eucharist – as Francis was each day – to witness to the same Lord who came to serve in love and not be served, proclaiming the very way of the Lord in word and action.

We echo the words of people in St Peter's Square at the end of the Requiem this morning:

*Grazie Francesco
Thank you Francis*

May he rest in peace and rise in Glory

Amen

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