



The Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time 23rd July 2023

Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Enlighten the eyes of our minds” (Alleluia verse 16th Sunday Ephesians 1:18)

This week I was blessed to celebrate a Requiem for a 94 year old lady from Jamaica who I had first met in 1974 in my first parish, Holy Souls, Acocks Green. She had recalled that first meeting as the reason for her continuing in the Church and realising the importance of the Holy Eucharist, which she described as: “where I touch God”. My interest in her doesn’t seem a lot; no more than any priest might do, yet it resulted in years of faithfulness to the Church and to the West Indian Chaplaincy which is based at Our Lady of the Caribbean Chapel Centre in Birchfield, Aston in Birmingham. As she became more frail Holy Communion was taken to her by priests and special ministers at her daughter’s home in St Ambrose Barlow, Hall Green. The Requiem was in St Francis, Handsworth: some 300+ people mainly of Jamaican heritage attended the Requiem. I give thanks that my small action of welcome, together with ongoing support of the Church, led to this wonderful celebration. I mention this especially because of the Gospel this Sunday where Jesus speaks of the mustard seed “*which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest shrub of all and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and shelter in its branches.*” I am amazed that my small action – a welcome – bore so much fruit. We are not always so blessed as to see growth of the good seed we plant in life: nevertheless we are encouraged by the words of the parable of the mustard seed to believe that we really can contribute to the growth of God’s Kingdom; we are called even in the small ways we are capable of to play our part in building the Kingdom of God.

My eyes fell on the words of the Alleluia verse (chosen from Ephesians 1:18)

“May the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us”.

The Christian life is an ongoing experience of growing in our faith, knowledge and understanding of God and our relationship with Jesus Christ. The prayer in Ephesians is for His Light to guide our ways to the fulness of the Kingdom where “*the virtuous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of Our Father*” as Jesus says at the end of the Gospel for the 16th Sunday.

This coming week we have the Feast of St Charbel Makhlouf, the hermit Saint from Lebanon, whose life of prayer and poverty, reminds us of the need “*to liberate the soul in its ascent to God*” as Pope St Paul VI said at his beatification in 1965 where he pointed to

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



the fact that we live in a world *"fascinated by wealth and comfort"*. St Charbel's way of life would be out of reach for most of us, but it highlights the importance of detachment from material things if we are to see the way of Christ, if we are to allow the Father to *"enlighten the eyes of our mind"*.

Another Feast I would point to this coming week in the search for enlightenment so that we can see the way to walking with Our Lord in building the Kingdom is that of St James the Great of Compostella. Around this special shrine has grown the "Camino", the walk to Compostella, a journey which reminds us to continue being "searchers" for enlightenment on the way to the fulness of the Kingdom. A recent retiree of 75 doing the Camino to Santiago writes, "At the end of Day 1 and almost 15 miles, I wasn't the same person who's started out. Looking across to Marcia (her walking companion) at dinner that first night, I said, "I'm happy". I could feel a smile spreading across my face and I felt hopeful in a way I haven't in such a long time, like my life was opening up again". The Camino is not for everyone, but taking the opportunity to journey spiritually is for everyone, and that can open up to us in many different ways. One that is advised strongly by the Church is reflecting prayerfully on the Scriptures with the help of a written or audio guide recommended by the Catholic Church. Another is following the Cycle of the Saints remembered and celebrated at daily Mass. They all have their story to tell, of living out the Faith in their time and situation that can inspire us like Saints Charbel and St James this coming week.

"May the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope His call holds for us". Amen.

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