



**19<sup>th</sup> Week of the Year and the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady**  
**Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh – 11 and 15 August**

***“If anyone loves me he will keep my word”***

(Alleluia verse 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday)

(Wednesday 7 August)

As I began writing this Reflection we were in the midst of community conflict across the United Kingdom. On Tuesday I heard a Radio report of “racially motivated hate crime in Belfast”: no part of the UK has been safe in the past week. Happily as I continue my Reflection this Thursday 8 August, the news is better of many communities coming out to say “No Racism” and “Welcome Refugees”.

Soon (29 September) we have the Church Annual World Day of Migrants and Refugees: the Holy Father’s message for the Day is ‘God works with his people.’ Pope Francis writes: *“it is possible to see the migrants of our time, as in those of every age, a living image of God’s people on their way to the eternal homeland. Their journeys of hope remind us that our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Phil 3:20). The Pope draws parallels from the images of biblical exodus and migrants, saying that like the people of Israel at the time of Moses, many *“migrants flee from oppression, abuse, insecurity, discrimination and lack of opportunities for development.”* And goes on to say that like the Exodus God goes with his people: I see that personally in the material and social support offered by Organisations like St Chad’s Sanctuary in this Diocese and the presence of God “showing and illuminating” the way through Ethnic Chaplaincies. In these ways migrants in our midst *“experience God as their travelling companion, guide and anchor”* (God walks with His people). Pope Francis concludes his message: *“Dear brothers and sisters, on this day dedicated to migrants and refugees, let us unite in prayer for all those who have had to leave their land in search of dignified living conditions. May we journey together with them, be ‘synodal’ together, and entrust them to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a sure sign of hope and consolation to the faithful people of God as they continue their journey.”*

The Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales has produced a document “Love the Stranger” a Catholic response to refugees and migrants. This places the human being at the heart of our pastoral outreach, looking beyond statistics and policies to the person – *“each with a name, a face and a story”* quoting Pope Francis. Bishop Declan Lang, Chair of the Department of International Affairs, and Bishop Paul McAleenan, lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees provide the forward, they say: *“those arriving from other parts of the world are our sisters and brothers. We are called to see Christ in them, for all people*

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*are created in His image. And we are created in His image. And we are called to see ourselves in them, for we all share in this common humanity."*

We continue reading from St John's Gospel Chapter 6 this 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year: we call it the Bread of Life Discourse, and it leads us to reflect on different ways in which we see Jesus as one who sustains our journey in faith. One way touched on in the part of Chapter we read this Sunday is being open to the teaching of Jesus which we see continued through the Church in our times. Jesus says: "*It is written in the prophets: they will all be taught by God, and to hear the teaching of the Father and learn from it, is to come to me.*" In his commentary on last week's section of St John Chapter 6 Joseph Pollard says that the bread that endures to eternal life "*is Jesus himself. It is his saving words. It is his gospel. It is the truth of God which he speaks.*" Before Pilate, Christ proclaims that '*he has come into the world to bear witness to the truth*' (John 18:37). The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us of our duty as Christians to take part in the life of the Church and bear witness to the Gospel and the obligations that flow from it. Quoting the Second Vatican Council Document *Ad gentes* (To the Nations) on the missionary activity of the Church it says: "*All Christians by the examples of their lives and the witness of their word, wherever they live, have an obligation to manifest the new man which they have put on in Baptism.*"

We are conscious then of the importance of listening to Church teaching, applying the Lord's truth in many areas of life that stand out today, including that of 'welcoming the stranger'. We are blessed to have the prayers of Our Lady to support us on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and an important truth that this celebration points to: everyone of every race and language is called to the fullness of life in God. In the Preface of the Mass, we will hear these words: "*today the Virgin Mother of God was assumed into Heaven as the beginning and image of your Church's coming to perfection and a sign of more hope and comfort to your pilgrim people.*"

I conclude with a portion of the prayer with which Pope Francis concludes 'God walks with his people':

"God, Almighty Father, we are your Pilgrim Church journeying towards the kingdom of Heaven.....

Help us to keep walking, together with our migrant brothers and sisters, towards the eternal dwelling you have prepared for us. Open our eyes and our hearts so that every encounter with those in need becomes an encounter with Jesus, your Son and our Lord.  
Amen

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