



Passing by on the other side

Reflection for the 15th Week of the Year – 13 July 2025

Mgr Daniel McHugh

"Your words, O Lord, are spirit and life; you have the words of eternal life"

[John 6 Gospel Acclamation]

This week we have been hearing again about the Post Office Scandal: thousands of Sub postmasters were pursued for apparent financial shortfalls based on a faulty IT System. It has been the occasion of a major miscarriage of justice on an unprecedented scale. The publication of the Horizon IT Inquiry Report on Tuesday 8 July has led to more interviews with those who have suffered financial loss and illness due to being pursued as criminals. One TV interview struck me in particular: a couple who spoke about the way they had been deserted by family and friends who assumed they were guilty. It was sad to hear it and struck me as a very up-to-date example of "*passing by on the other side*" which is at the heart of the Gospel for the 15th Sunday of the Year. The Good Samaritan Parable is one that can lead to deep soul searching for all of us: to me "*passing by on the other side*" can happen in many different situations. One, of course, is not caring for the sick and the injured. Just today I was talking with a lady who had visited her former Parish Priest in a Care Home: a man who has cared for so many is now in need of loving support himself; she talked about the way his meals are delivered and there is no attempt to help him eat despite the fact that he is too weak to feed himself. We can think of many similar situations I am sure. We can't respond to all the needs there are, but joined to others in our Catholic Community there can be a good and caring reaction, as I saw in the case of another priest where parishioners have joined together to form a visiting rota.

This is not a Reflection on caring for sick priests only, though that matters; in the Parable of the Samaritan we see the mind of Jesus about love of God and neighbour in response to the lawyer's question "Who is my neighbour?" It is especially significant that Jesus chooses a Samaritan as an exemplar of caring for the injured person: the Samaritans and Jews were divided. The commentary in Loyola Press Sunday Connection spells it out: "*Samaritans were descendants of Jews from the Northern part of the country, who had intermingled with Gentiles and did not worship in Jerusalem. The Samaritan not only goes over to the injured man, but cleans his wounds, puts him on his own animal, takes him to an Inn to recover, and promises to pay all the expenses. The hated enemy is the compassionate neighbour in this Parable. Jesus has demolished all the boundary expectations. It is not social definitions such as class, religion, gender or ethnicity that determines who is my neighbour. A neighbour is a person who acts with compassion towards another. The point becomes not who deserves to be loved as I love myself, but that I become a person who treats everyone with compassion.*" To the lawyer Jesus says: "Go

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



and do likewise". The Commentary concludes: "The lawyer, and we, know what is right. The key is to do it."

I understand the BBC Radio 4 Programme the Moral Maze this Wednesday 9 July will examine the question whether we need people who are "*influencers*" and "*models*" for us to follow. Catholics have always looked to Jesus himself as the one to whom we look, on whom we model our lives. In the case of the Parable of the Good Samaritan we see the ideal He puts before us in care of our neighbour. We also look to the story of the Saints who have lived their lives influenced by Him. Today 9 July we have the Memorial of the Chinese Martyrs, St Augustine Zhao Rong and Companions. The Feast commemorates 126 Chinese Martyrs, who suffered between 1648 and 1930. They include European missionaries such as St Gregory Grassi, the Italian born Bishop of North Shanxi martyred during the Boxer Rebellion, and indigenous Christians such as St Augustine Zhao Rong a diocesan priest put to death in 1815. They were canonized by St John Paul in 2000.

The Good News of Jesus Christ is intended for all peoples; the Chinese Martyrs knew that, and we are called to like them to share that Good News too. In today's culture, it can be tempting to soften or dilute the message of the Gospel in order to make it more palatable. Father Patrick van der Vorst writes regularly in a post 'Christian Art'. In his blog on the Gospel for the Chinese Martyrs he writes: "*Christ's message is not one of comfort and convenience; it is radical and transformative. Our task is not to reshape his word, but to allow His word to reshape us, and through us, the world.*"

Pope St Paul VI famously stated: "*Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses*" [Evangelii Nuntiandi 1975].

What we proclaim needs to be lived out in practice if we are to be witnesses to Christ in the world today.

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