



11th Week of the Year: 13th/14th June 2021

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“It is good to give you thanks, O Lord.”

This past week I have received from Archbishop Longley a copy of an Appeal by the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops of Lebanon for support to Lebanon in its “message of freedom and witness to harmonious co-existence.” Sadly, the country has been going through a very difficult time due to political corruption and a huge ingress of refugees from Syria, threatening to destabilize the country. The Church is under threat too because of Islamic Extremism. In the midst of turmoil leading to parts of the country suffering starvation, the Church, which traditionally is strong there, is taking a lead in appealing to the International Community not to stand by and see its disintegration. Pope Francis will shortly be meeting with Church leaders in Rome to consider the role of the Church there looking to the future. We have already been impressed by the Holy Father’s role in bringing the different Faiths in Iraq together in witness to our common humanity. The Church has been given new hope after years of suffering persecution that an era of harmonious co-existence may be found.

Reflecting on the beautiful image in the Gospel for the 11th Sunday, of the Kingdom of God being like a mustard tree where the birds of the air find shelter in the shade, I find great encouragement from the way the Church is indeed being seen in the Middle East in these days. Many see it now as the place where different peoples, different Faiths can find a place of mutual understanding and respect. More than once I have heard that the Catholic Church is the glue that keeps peoples together: in terms of this Sunday’s Gospel as “-the tree where the birds of the air can find shelter.”

It will not have missed you that the Psalm for the 11th Sunday mentions another tree, one that Lebanon is famous for, the Cedar, where the Psalmist encourages the Faithful “planted in the house of the Lord” that they will “flourish in the courts of our God”. In his Pastoral Letter for the 11th Sunday Archbishop Longley highlights the reading from the Prophet Ezekiel where the Cedar is an image of growth - “it will sprout branches and bear fruit and become a noble Cedar” - to encourage the Clergy and People of Diocese to consider the green shoots of life in the Church following the long lockdown of the Pandemic. I have seen evidence of the way Priests have adapted and continued to minister to their people often using new technology that they were not familiar with; and parishioners and Schools reaching out to people in need in their communities. There is so much to give thanks for: the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church is evident when we look around us, and there is much to give thanks for in the words of the Psalm for the 11th Sunday: “It is good to give you thanks, O Lord”.

At the same time, at home and abroad, we are ever more conscious of the need to be “missionary disciples”: the families we live in, the communities we are part of, the

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society our children are growing up in, and the wider world, are in need of the good news of the Gospel.

The other Sunday Pope Francis spoke of the culture that “colonised” indigenous peoples, that destroyed their dignity and worth. Now and then we are bought up sharply by the horror of the sin that is still deep in our human nature, that we have to co-operate with the Holy Spirit to root out and transform.

Let us renew the sincerity of the opening prayer of the Mass today as we continue to strive for a new vision, an openness to the world, and repentance of our old ways:

*O God, strength of those who hope in you, graciously hear our pleas, and since without you mortal frailty can do nothing, grant us always the help of your grace, that in following your commands we may please you by our resolve and our deeds.
Amen.*

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