



Homily / Reflection 23rd Week in Ordinary Time – Mgr Daniel McHugh
6/7 September 2020

“O that today you would listen to His voice! Harden not your hearts.”

This past week it has been reported that the numbers of passengers on a TUI flight from Greece to Cardiff infected by Coronavirus (through people not wearing masks or not wearing them properly) has jumped from 7 to 16. As a result, some 193 people have to be contacted and tested. After all the warnings people are refusing to listen! I thought of this as I read the first reading from Ezekiel in the Mass for the 23rd Sunday. Ezekiel was to be a Sentry, a watchman for God’s people, to speak truth to them. Not an easy task; many prophets had to suffer for what they said. We hear of them being rejected, being stoned and of course John the Baptist whose Feast we kept recently 29 August was beheaded for questioning the behavior of Herod.

The Gospel of Matthew deals with the issue of behavior in the Church, and Jesus guides the disciples on ways to deal with it. Fortunately, at the level of the Pope himself we have a great Sentry, a watchman, who steers us in the right direction on some of the great issues of our day. I am thinking particularly of his teaching on the Environment, and our care for the earth, our common home, which he has reflected on again this past week in terms of the way we exploit it for our own greedy ends, often at the expense of the poor and vulnerable. He has spoken too about the Pandemic and justice for the most in need in this difficult time, particularly those who may not have access to proper healthcare.

The issue for us today is summed up in the response to the Psalm: *“O that today you would listen to His voice! Harden not your hearts.”* Often we listen but do not want to hear in case it challenges our way of acting.

We are “fortunate” to have the words of St Paul in the letter to the Romans this Sunday: *“Avoid getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love”*. I say fortunate, a better word is “blessed” because this is the basis of a Sentry’s task. He or she is called to bring to the flock God’s message in the context of love. It doesn’t make it easy though: as you will know bringing the right way of doing things to the attention of your children or family can be a challenge, yet that is what we are called to do.

My thoughts go to Lebanon and its political leaders and the disaster that came on Beirut with 300 thousand homes destroyed. They had been warned about the storage of chemicals, but they had not listened, and if they did, they did not hear what it meant and take action. And the people going to rave parties here at home and/or not keeping to guidelines to avoid spreading the virus: the result many more infections.

It is a difficult time for all who seek to take the right path and correct others who are inclined to be selfish. That is why in the little “The Burning Bush” VLOG I produce

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



weekly with friends, I chose the Hymn “Lead us Heavenly Father lead us o’er the world’s tempestuous sea.” On this Education Sunday we are particularly conscious of making the right decisions for our children going to school and those going to university, that they may be safe in this time of the Pandemic. But, education is not just for young people, it needs to continue all through life; adults need to learn too and to be concerned for each other. Pope Francis spoke of the need for “solidarity” in going beyond the Pandemic.

I don’t conduct as many Funerals now that I am not a Parish Priest, but I conducted one recently. It was sad that we were limited to just 30 and people had to be socially distanced and wearing masks and Holy Communion in the hand. And everyone had to sanitize and be recorded in case any infection took place. But, everyone followed the agreed guidelines from the Church and State. We did what is right for the deceased and the Church Community; a recording of *Nessun Dorma*, *No One Sleeps*, sung by Pavarotti was played on the way out and we gave thanks for a wonderful life that will now be fulfilled in Heaven.

It was different, like the Mass we have each Sunday, but thank God for looking over us:
“O that today you would listen to His voice! Harden not your hearts.”

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