



33rd Week of the Year: 15th and 16th November 2020

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Keep Faithful and I will give you the Crown of Life.”

The good news this past week is the emergence of a vaccine which is shown to be 90% effective in treatment to safeguard us against the Corona Virus. Very soon some of us or our relations will be offered the jabs. How should we feel about it? Like everything it seems, the answer is not straightforward! It's early days, so we can't be sure of possible side effects and so on; we will have to trust in those who have developed and tested it and that, on balance, it is good to go ahead!

Then there are all sorts of rumors from those who are called “Anti-Vaxxers” who see some dark forces scheming in the background. How much credence do we give to some of this? Well, while being aware of “fake news” as an issue and possible plans for takeover of the world, we have to trust that in matters so central to life and death, we have wise people in Government, in Charities and Health Services, who care for our welfare.

And, in the case of concerns expressed by the Church and others, regarding the use of tissue from aborted children as sources of new vaccines, it is important to know that our Bishops have been active and have issued a response to this new reality; it's in a paper entitled “COVID-19 and Vaccinations” issued by the Department of Social Justice of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. It is well worth reading and can be accessed on the internet. An important quotation in this paper comes from the Pontifical Academy for Life where it is stated that “the technical characteristics of the production of the vaccines most commonly used in childhood lead us to exclude that there is morally relevant co-operation between those who use these vaccines today and the practice of voluntary abortion. Hence, we believe that all clinically recommended vaccinations can be used with a clear conscience and that the use of such vaccines does not signify some sort of co-operation with voluntary abortion.”

However, given how conscious we are that life should be respected from the moment of conception to death, it is natural that we be concerned. The Bishops' Department expresses concern that vaccines be sourced ethically and that the government should ensure new abortions should not be procured in order to provide material for vaccines. Indeed, the Department goes further and urges the government to ensure that ethically sourced vaccines are available.

Happily, I am assured that the new Pfizer BioNTech is one of those not being developed using foetal cell lines. There is a document from the Charlotte Lazier Institute listing all the COVID-19 vaccine candidates and their use, or not, of foetal cell lines. This is an occasion when we can be glad for guidance available from the Church: we would expect to have such expertise in ethical and moral issues at a time like this.

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



As the Gospel highlights today we all have a part to play in preparing for the Kingdom: we have talents, precious gifts, that are not to be hidden but used for the benefit of all. Last week we thought of Staying Alert for the moment Christ, the Bridegroom, comes. This week in the Parable of the Talents, Jesus urges us to use the gifts we have been given well. I liked very much a post on Facebook this week from St George and St Teresa School, Dorridge: it depicts hands raised in prayerful offering to God, overlaid with these words from St Teresa of Avila

*“Christ has no body now, but yours.
No hands, no feet on earth, but yours.
Yours are the eyes through
which Christ looks compassion
into the World.
Yours are the feet with which
Christ walks to do good.
Yours are the hands with which
Christ blesses the world.”*

These words of St Teresa remind me of the words from St Paul in the Letter to the Romans Chapter 12. We all have talents and gifts: we need to discover and develop them for the good of the whole community. Sometimes we can be fearful, not of the Lord, but of what others may think, and bury our gifts. Today we are being encouraged: the Master will not judge us on the basis of the greatness of our talents or gifts, but on how well we developed and used the gifts we have. We hear again the words from the Gospel Acclamation this Sunday “Be Faithful and I will give you the Crown of Life”.

Thank God for the talents of those who offer us guidance through the Bishops’ Department for Social Justice; we thank God for our own gifts too. May we all, as St Paul says, “work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of Spirit.” Then we will be ready for the Master’s return when we will give an account of the use of our talents, our gifts, in His service.

12th November 2020

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