



16th Week in Ordinary Time 21 July 2024

Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“See I have God for my help. The Lord sustains my soul”

(Entrance Antiphon Psalm 53 16th Sunday)

As I was travelling to Our Lady and St Michael’s, Shipston, on Sunday morning 14th to celebrate Mass for the Parish Priest who was taking a break, I had Radio 5 Live on in the car. Not a surprise that the News was covering England v Spain that evening. What struck me was the reflection of Gary Lineker the well-known commentator: he felt the strength of the English Team lay in the way the players valued each other, recognising the contribution each one made to the whole. That was how they had reached their goal of being in the Final of the European Cup. Lineker thought this was the achievement of the Manager Gareth Southgate who had instilled a culture of unity and working together. As we know England did not win the match and Southgate has now resigned, but this does not detract from the achievement of bringing together a group of very diverse players, each of whom had his own ambitions, to reach such heights of success.

I began to think of the Church and the mission to take the peace of Christ to the world, and the amount of time we can spend in being critical of each other, not valuing the part each one plays in its goal of building the kingdom, and focusing on our own agendas instead. That evening I was concelebrating Mass with the Nigerian Chaplaincy: I enjoyed the music and dance typical of their homeland and culture. I thanked the Chaplain for keeping the people together with a monthly Mass in their own language and I encouraged them to continue to cherish their Faith and share its vibrancy with us, the host community.

I am very aware of the challenges we face in a very secular society and the role different Catholic ethnic communities can play in sustaining the Faith and Witness of the Church in a changing world which is displaying so many pagan values. I thought the community appreciated my comments. The day before, Saturday 13 July, I was present at the Dedication Mass of the Catholic Men’s Association being established in the Archdiocese by the Cameroonian Chaplaincy. I have been aware of the unique importance of the Cameroonian Catholic Women’s Association already established for some years: the women are so committed to following their Catholic Faith and supporting each other keeping it alive through daily online prayer, scripture study and charitable action in their community, and their local parishes. Their Patron is Our Lady Queen of Peace. The

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



men, under the Patronage of St Joseph, will bring a new dimension to the witness of men to their Faith too.

Valuing each other in the Mission of the Church was central to my thinking as I started to write this Reflection on the Feast of Blessed Robert Grissold (on 17 July), Patron of the Church in Balsall Common, a daughter Church of my former parish of St George and St Teresa, Dorridge. We celebrated the 400th anniversary of his martyrdom while I was Parish Priest. His Feast points to one of the most important examples of valuing each other in the Mission of the Church: the faithfulness of People and Priests to each other. Robert Grissold was a layman from Rowington, near Balsall Common, and he together with Fr John Sugar, was captured on the way from celebrating Mass at Baddesley Clinton, a Manor House, and refuge for persecuted Catholics in the 1590's, close to the Church of St Francis of Assisi. Robert Grissold could have escaped with his life if he denied John Sugar: he refused and both were martyred at Warwick. He is an inspiration both in his commitment to Fr John Sugar and his love of the Eucharist.

The Mission of the Church continues to be challenging in our days as it was in Reformation times and indeed the time of Jesus Himself. The unity among all people that Our Lord brought about by the shedding of His Blood, spoken of by St Paul in the passage from the letter to the Ephesians read on the 16th Sunday, means *we "have in the one Spirit our way to come to the Father."* The Mission we are all engaged in of taking the good news of Jesus to the crowds who are "like sheep without a shepherd" as St Mark writes in the Sunday Gospel of the time of Our Lord, is demanding.

"We who are Jesus' disciples today have also been sent to share the Gospel with others" says the writer of the Sunday Connection Commentary.... "Jesus wanted his disciples to come away and spend time alone with him. This is what we seek and find in our life of prayer and in our celebration of the Eucharist."

The 53rd International Eucharistic Congress takes place in the Ecuadorian Capital 8-15 September 2024, and in England we are participating in it with "Adoremus at Oscott" where representatives of the Dioceses across the country come together, on 14 September, followed by Adoremus in Parishes on Sunday 15 September (a Holy Hour or period of prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament). There we *"come away for a while"* to be with Our Lord the one who *"sustains my soul"* (Psalm 53) and renews me for the Mission I am privileged to share.

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