



"Pray, Hope and Don't Worry"

25th Sunday of the Year - and the Memorial of St Padre Pio

Mgr Daniel McHugh 21 and 23 September

"For your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9)

This past week I have been on a Jubilee Year Pilgrimage. As many will know the regular Jubilee Year occurs in the Catholic Church every 25 Years, and is marked by a call to Repentance and generous forgiveness by the Church known as a Plenary Indulgence. It is basically a call to renewal in living out our Faith as a community, and this past year we have been doing this, guided by the theme of "Hope". In a complex world where there is so much conflict and concern for the future, this theme has spoken to the future and now we Catholic Christian people see it.

Our Pilgrimage – a week away from the routine of daily living to journey and reflect prayerfully in inspiring places, began in Bari with a special Shrine of St Nicholas, a saint from the 300s whose remains were brought there in the 1100s from Myra in present day Turkey, at a time when Islam was threatening to destroy remembrance of this Saint whose name gave rise to the tradition of Santa Claus and giving gifts to children, especially on 6 December (his Feast) and again at Christmas. Not only is the story of St Nicholas an encouragement to treasure our Catholic traditions, but also a reminder of the generosity that should mark our lives as Christian people. The fact that there is a magnificent Basilica in Bari to house the remains of St Nicholas, added to the pleasure that a Pilgrimage can generate. The custom of the "Holy Door" is kept for the Jubilee Year in the Basilica, and we reflected that going through it is recalling to mind Christ being the Gate, the Door to being part of His Flock, striving to live a new life closer to Him.

Then our Pilgrims moved on to Alberobello: more of a "holiday" day where we saw the wonderful "conical" Trulli limestone houses that are so popular with tourists in that part of Apuglia. However, we continued our praying the Rosary and the Jubilee Prayer on our coach, and Mass in the Church of St Anthony of Padua, a beautiful Church in the style of the Trulli dwellings. St Anthony is known as the

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



popular Saint we pray to when we lose something, but of course he was much more than that; known especially for his being a follower of St Francis of Assisi. Originally from Lisbon in Portugal, he finished his life in Padua. Anthony's preaching – inspired so much by the Scriptures – led to his being proclaimed a Doctor of the Church. Noted for his undying love for the poor and sick, he was canonised within a year of his death. In my homilies I reflected on the Church dedication – in this case St Anthony, as well as the Saint being celebrated on the day – and the Scripture readings scheduled for the current day/week of the year. We had plenty to dwell on in terms of our Faith Journey and the concerns we all have in our family life and in society/the world today.

Then, it was on to Lecce, known as the “Florence of the South” for its outstanding Baroque Architecture. Here there was so much to see and enjoy, and for us Pilgrims in Faith there was St Orontius, Patron Saint of the City, the Bishop who founded the Catholic Community there, sent by St Paul himself in the first Century. We were able to reflect there on our call as Christians to spread our Faith and Life in Jesus, and to examine our living of the Gospel.

It was especially on our visits to Pietrelcina and San Giovanni Rotondo where we heard and saw more of the life of Padre Pio, the Capuchin Priest who carried the wounds of Jesus on his body, the “Stigmata”, that we came face to face with a Saint whose following of Jesus was so recent (he only died in 1968) and based on the total giving for all that is found in the passion and crucifixion of Jesus. His Feast Day is this coming week 23 September, and we began a Novena to the Sacred Heart (which Padre Pio prayed) in preparation for the Feast.

When we consider the readings from Scripture for the 25th Sunday of the Year we are conscious that following the way of Jesus is demanding, especially when it comes to the attachment we have to material things and the powers of this world. In his commentary Father Ferlita in “Paths of Life” refers to the choice before the great St Thomas More in “Man for All Seasons” where More says: “...man he (God) made to serve him wittily in the tangle of his mind.” Ferlita is referring to the shrewd manager in the Gospel Parable who is an example to us of prudence in our spiritual lives. Thomas More was in a difficult situation with Henry VIII and though he wished to retain his friendship he couldn't compromise the principles of his Catholic Faith. We too have to be prudent: we can't compromise the principles we are called to live by. The Jubilee Year is an opportunity to reflect on the choices we make in the light of the challenges of the Gospel, the challenges of our Catholic Life. I like those words of Padre Pio as we struggle with “the tangles” of our mind:

“Pray, Hope and Don't Worry.”

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese