



7th Sunday of the Year 23 February 2025

Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Be merciful even as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36)

The martyrdom of Coptic Christians at the hands of IS (Islamic State) 10 years ago was recalled in the news this past week. They were from Egypt and engaged in construction work in Libya. They could have saved their lives by denying Christ, and were recognised as Saints by Pope Tawadros II of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Alexandria on 15 May, and enlisted in the Roman Martyrology (21 in total) in 2023 by Pope Francis. So both Churches recognise these martyrs on the same day. This move by Pope Francis was seen as an important ecumenical gesture, and for all us Christians to give thanks and acclaim in this Jubilee Year: truly positive signs of witness to Christ. The Coptic Cathedral of St Mary and Archangel Michael is close to me in Solihull: the main lay lead is an Egyptian Doctor who came to work in the Hospitals of Birmingham some years ago. I was thinking in the light of Pope Francis wish that we tell positive stories of our Faith in Action in the Jubilee Year: a visit to the Cathedral to hear this story and proclaim our common Faith would be a special ecumenical initiative this year. It is a contemporary story that illustrates the message of Scripture for the 6th Sunday Mass which we celebrated last week: *“Blessed is the man who has placed his trust in the Lord.”* The Prophet Jeremiah says *“He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes for its leaves remain green.”*

Thinking of the Baptism I celebrated on Sunday last I dare to believe that the parents and godparents see in the words of Jeremiah a truth that matters to them for their young child too: material things are not the be-all and end-all of life; that indeed those things come to an end and there is something more important. This is what they are handing on to their son in Baptism. The Gospel reading from St Luke last Sunday challenged all of us to reflect on what is most important in our lives: we will find our true fulfillment in the Kingdom of Heaven, not in this world.

Fr Ferlita in ‘Paths of Life’, his commentary on the Sunday readings says this re the Sixth Sunday *“Trust in God is at the ‘heart and center’ of Jesus’ teaching, the opposite is trust in things”*....yes, Jesus trusted in God, even as he hung upon the Cross, and God did indeed deliver him.

The Resurrection is God’s response to that trust. As Paul proclaimed in the second reading...*“Christ trusted and he was raised, the first of all who trust in God.”*

We are conscious as we journey in hope this Jubilee Year of the need to come closer to Jesus in our lives as individuals and as a community. The Sunday readings from Scripture challenge us week by week and the Feasts, memorials of saints,

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commemorations and special themes give us pause for prayer, reflection and action. So, the Gospel for this 7th Sunday is a continuation of the teaching that began in last Sunday's Gospel. We continue to hear from St Luke's Sermon on the Plain, his version of St Matthew's Sermon on the Mount...Loyal Press Commentary says: *"These words of Jesus' teaching are familiar to us. They constitute the crux and the challenge of what it means to be a disciple. Love your enemies, turn the other cheek, give to those who ask, lend without expecting repayment, judge not lest you be judged....In both Gospels (Matthew and Luke) Jesus words challenge those who would follow him to be more like God. God loves us beyond our expectations, beyond anything we can possibly imagine. In response to God's love, we are to love as God loves, beyond expectations and with a depth beyond imagining."* In the Sacrament of Penance we meet a merciful God, we celebrate that in our Divine Mercy Devotions and in the Gospel for the 7th Sunday Jesus challenges us *"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."*

This weekend we celebrate the Feast of the Chair of St Peter, a Feast that focuses Catholics on the unique role of St Peter and his successors as leader of the Church on earth. One of the special gifts of Pope Francis, who is being prayed for especially due to his deteriorating health at this time, has been his continuing teaching on *"mercy"* particularly the need for the Church to be merciful to sinners, and to those who for one reason or another fall short of the ideals of the Gospel. We individuals are to be merciful too.

Fr Ferlita in his commentary writes: *"When we look into our hearts, what do we see? It may be that, first of all, we see our injuries! They can become so much part of us that we can hardly imagine ourselves without them. But, there must also be in our hearts a readiness to forgive, in expectation of that moment when the other is ready to be forgiven. If it is not there, that readiness, then we must pray for it, that we may be to others as God is to us, "Be merciful even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). To the extent that we are not we still bear "the image of the man of dust" as St Paul says in the second reading (1 Corinthians 15) for the 7th Sunday. But, to the extent that we show mercy we "bear the image of the man of heaven" (1 Cor 15:49), that is Jesus Christ our Lord."*

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