



3rd Sunday of the Year (C) and Sunday of the Word of God 26 January 2025
Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness” John 8:12 (Communion Antiphon)

On Wednesday 22 January I celebrated Mass in Our Lady of the Wayside, Shirley, as the Parish Priest is on Retreat. I always have a short Reflection after the Gospel that takes in any Saint being commemorated and points from the Scripture Reading. Yesterday we were remembering Saint Vincent of Saragossa in Spain who is very much revered in popular devotion and celebrations. He was a Deacon, martyred 304 in the time of Diocletian and revered for his care of the poor as well as outstanding in Church administration. Saragossa is in North East Spain and very much on tourist routes. I always like to be able, if possible, to relate a Saint to an area people may know. In this case Saragossa is next door to Pamplona which is famous for the Bull-Run. Much more interesting though the Scripture Readings for the Day: Week 2 in Ordinary Time. The first reading was from the Letter to the Hebrews and focused on Jesus the Priest; it gave me the opportunity to speak about the share of all Christians in His Priesthood, something we inherit through Baptism. The main thrust of this part of my reflection was on ‘Thanksgiving’. The second reading was from St Mark’s Gospel where Jesus cured a disabled man on the Sabbath; something the Pharisees were critical of. I asked people to examine their own attitudes in terms of instilling narrow ways of behaving towards others on the grounds of what is customary or acceptable. The overall lesson from my Reflection was on how much we learn from prayerful reading of the Scriptures at Mass for our Spiritual Growth.

This is very much the thrust of the Sixth Sunday of the Word this coming weekend, which offers us the opportunity to renew our commitment to reading and meditating on the Bible as a fundamental tool for growth in faith and the spiritual life. Pope Francis, who will preside at Mass in St Peter’s on Sunday 26th, will take up the theme taken from the Psalms “I hope in Your Word”, and will speak of the Word in Scripture as a source of hope for the faithful worldwide, so linking to the Jubilee Year. It seems to me that the Scripture at Sunday Mass (and at weekday Mass for those who can attend) is at the centre of renewal of love and reverence for the Scriptures. There are new resources available to all from the Dicastery for Evangelization’s website at www.evangelizatio.va : these are to aid our connection to God’s Word. It was interesting this past week, if you followed the inauguration of the American President, how central the Bible was to the Ceremony. In the case of the new President he had his mother’s bible as well as the official copy. Whatever we think of his politics, the Bible points to God, who keeps us anchored in ageless truth. It is sad to say that when it comes to a moment when we need a Bible – such as at our Funeral Mass – Catholic homes often do not possess one! The

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Jubilee Year would be the moment when we place a Bible in our homes showing that the Scriptures reveal God's plan for our Salvation and are the foundation of our Faith.

This third Sunday of the Year we are living in a time of much uncertainty. Just last evening I was watching a report on the World Economic Forum in Davos which is very much a focus of world attention. The former Chief Economist at the Bank of England, Andy Haldane, was saying: "The world feels fragile economically, socially, politically." It is into this world that the Jubilee Year is launched. In the Gospel of St Luke we hear these words of Jesus:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

Father Ferlita in his commentary writes: *"This is God's desire for mankind, and Jesus embodies that desire, makes it present, makes it felt, in his own time and place. By his death and resurrection, Jesus makes it possible for us, as, members of his body, to make that desire present and felt in our own time and place – to heal, to free, to restore, to bless, bring humanity to its fulfilment – not only makes it possible but intends it, expects it of us. May that desire translate into willing, and that willing into action."*

It was in the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus came to bring salvation to humanity. *"The Holy Spirit is Jesus' gift to the Church and the Holy Spirit enables the Church to continue the mission of Jesus"* (Loyola Connection). When we do what Jesus did – bring glad tidings to the poor, liberty to captives, healing to the sick and freedom to the oppressed – we share in the Kingdom of God.

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