



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

“Beauty... Lifts Hearts and Minds Towards Heaven”

Reflection for the 17th Week of the Year

26 July 2026

Mgr Daniel McHugh

“The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant... who on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” (Matthew 13: 45-46)

It is holiday time: an opportunity to break from routine and to see things in a new way. I always remember my first spring day out in Rome as a student: we left the Latin lectures and headed for Lake Bracciano not far from the eternal city, but miles from the pressure of thinking about philosophy. The sun was shining on the Lake and the



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

air was lovely and fresh. I found myself thanking God for the beauty of nature. It came back to my mind as I read a post by Pauline Guzych about Pope St John Paul II as he grew older – and walking with a cane - going out early to see the sunrise over Monte Cavo the other side of Lake Albano from Castel Gandolfo. Pope Leo has just gone there for a summer break: I am sure he will look at that view too. At the weekend just gone, the residents of Albano and Castel Gandolfo put on a concert to welcome him. He spoke informally to those assembled reflecting on “the power of beauty to bring hope amid a world marked by war, violence and division.” "Beauty reminds us that there is more than all of this," he said, adding that it lifts hearts and minds "toward heaven" and reveals the good that people can create together (cf Shalom World News). He was speaking in the context of the beautiful music all were enjoying.

I hope this holiday time will give you an opportunity to stop amid the business of world and school to consider the lesson we learn from the scripture readings this weekend. I have been thinking about the new Religious Education Programme that will be introduced in Catholic Schools from the beginning of September, especially the sections on the Sacraments. It is expected that what takes place in school will be



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

complemented by catechesis in parishes. Catechesis is more than studying, learning about the Sacraments, it includes living the Sacraments. Those who give their time voluntarily in parishes or chaplaincies as catechists are motivated by a desire to share their lived Faith. One of the biggest challenges is to involve parents in this “enterprise”. As you will know, when parents bring their children for Baptism, they undertake to bring them up in the Faith. In the Rite of Baptism for Children, parents formally ask for Baptism for their children. The priest or deacon says: “You have asked to have your child baptised. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him(her) in the practice of the Faith. It will be your duty to bring him(her) up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbour. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?” The parents respond: “We do.” After the blessing of the Baptismal water the responsibility of parents and godparents is spelled out more fully. The Celebrant says: “You must make it your constant care to bring him(her) up in the practice of the Faith.” Later the Celebrant asks: “Is it your will that (Name) should be baptised in the Faith of the Church, which we all professed with you?” The parents and godparents respond: “It is.” Only then does the Celebrant say:



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

“(Name), I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

The question is, it seems to me, how are we, the Church, helping these young parents carry out the responsibility they are taking on? They have discovered the pearl of great price, Faith in the person of Jesus and the Sacraments of the Church; they have chosen to hand on this Faith to their children. Parents are at a key moment like Solomon was as recounted in the first Book of Kings. It is a famous, a beautiful passage: God says to him: “Ask what I shall give you.” I can see the Lord saying this to parents at this solemn moment. Solomon says: “Give your servant ... an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to govern this your great people?” It pleased God that Solomon had not asked for himself “long life or riches, or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right.”

In the Acclamation before the Gospel, we have a lovely phrase from Matthew 11:25, the words of the Lord himself: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, you have revealed the secrets of the kingdom to little children.”



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

This is what parents are called to do by the Lord Himself when they choose Baptism for their children. We must help them to do so. If we haven't done this at Baptism we have a special second opportunity at the time of First Confession, Holy Communion, and Confirmation to reveal the beauty of our Faith! This is what we are planning to help parents with as we work in our Deanery parishes to lift our hearts and minds towards heaven.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant... who on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”