



23rd Week of Ordinary Time: Reflection arising from the Scripture of the 23rd Sunday and the opening of the International Eucharistic Congress in Esztergom - Budapest 5th/6th September 2021

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“My soul is thirsty for the living God.”

These words are to be found in the Communion Antiphon for the 23rd Sunday of the Year. I always look for words from the Sunday Scripture around which I can build my Reflection. This Sunday, 5th September, is a special one because it is the beginning of the International Eucharistic Congress in Esztergom – Budapest in Hungary. Pope Francis will be celebrating the closing Mass on Sunday 12th September. The motto for the Congress is taken from Psalm 87 “All my springs are in you” which echoes the words of Our Lord in St John’s Gospel Chapter 7 “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture has said rivers of living water will flow from within them.” The Church in its sacraments is the source of the living God for whom we thirst.

And the Eucharist, the focus of the Congress, is the fountain, as clear as crystal, from which we draw the living water that is Christ in Holy Communion and pausing in Adoration.

The logo has one water source spreading out in fourfold streams representing the 4 evangelists; the single source represents the great River Danube too, which brings water to other countries in the region, uniting them with Hungary.

The Theological Document underpinning the Congress sees the Eucharist as the Centre of praise of God and the final Transformation of the Cosmos.

In the Gospel for the 23rd Sunday Jesus is seen going to the Decapolis region where he heals the deaf man with a speech impediment - something Isaiah prophesizes of the Messiah – but more than that He is a bridge builder (Pontifex): here He is in the land of the Gentiles and they receive the same treatment from Him as the Jews. More and more we see the Church in these days seeking to bring peoples together. The Eucharistic Congress itself will include the attendance of other Church leaders and religious representatives. Among them are Greek and Eastern Catholic Bishops, as well as Orthodox and Protestant guests and representatives of the Jewish Community and Civil Society.

In the Introduction the Document speaks of Hungary, the host country of the Congress: it highlights some aspects of Hungarian history starting with its deep Christian roots. It recalls the figure of St Stephen (1000 – 1038) the first King of Hungary, who introduced the Hungarian people into the community of the Christian nations of Europe. He was crowned in Rome by Pope Silvestro II. Stephen consecrated his reign to Mary the Great Lady “La grande Signora”, and with the help of the Benedictines of Cluny organized the

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Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



Church into Dioceses according to Roman tradition. Further he saw to justice for the poor and catechized them. In these days when we are considering how the role of lay people can harmoniously be integrated into the Mission of the Church, King Stephen is a model fulfilling the vision of the Second Vatican Council in its Decree on the Laity, particularly in Chapter 1 "The layman's call to the Apostolate." Here it states the layman "is called by God to burn with the spirit of Christ and to exercise his apostolate in the world as a kind of leaven," and "the laity share too in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own role to play in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world" (A.A.2).

St Stephen is buried where he was born in Esztergom. Nearby in the Basilica the remains of Ven. Cardinal Mindszenty rest. He is one of those who stood up for the Church in times of persecution not so long ago. The Catholic Church in Hungary has given many Saints to the Church. The Hungarian people are worthy of the motto that has been created by the theological commission: "Our past is our hope; our future is Christ".

We echo these words as we celebrate our love for the Eucharist with the people of Hungary in the coming week: "Faith of Our Fathers, living still in spite of Dungeon, Fire and Sword... We will be true to thee til death."

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